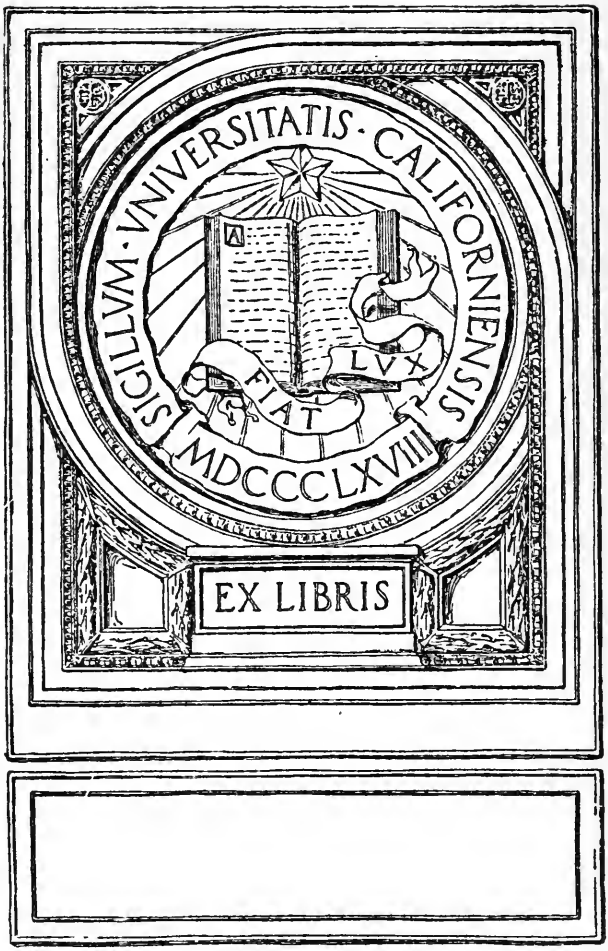
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POLAND THE UNKNOWN

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

K. WALISZEWSKI

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Of all the questions presented for settlement to the Congress of 1919, none was more momentous than that of Poland. Civilization has had to defend itself against Germany—a Prussified Germany. For forty years before the Great War Germany had been penetrated, hypnotized, dominated, possessed, by the evil spirit of Prussia. But the fabric of Prussia was originally reared on the ruins of Poland. Prussia only existed as a real power in Europe because, and when, Poland had ceased to exist. The Polish question is the Prussian question on its reverse side. Whatever Governments may say or do, the feeling of the peoples who have suffered from the Hohenzollerns is *Delenda est Borussia.* But the cry "Down with Prussia" is equivalent to the demand "Up with Poland."

Of the Three Tyrannies that broke up and absorbed Poland there were two of which it could not be affirmed that their Polish acquisitions were more than valuable additions to the terri-

tories they held already. The case of Prussia was absolutely different. A slice of Poland was merely *de bene esse* of Russia or Austria; of Prussia it was actually *de esse*. Until half a century ago a Prussia minus its Polish provinces would have been a petty State. By her seizure and assimilation of her Polish prey she gained and gathered the strength for future depredations. It was not the first of her criminal exploits; but it was her first venture in pillage on the grand scale.

The statement is perhaps more true of Prussia than of any other State—at any rate in modern times—that she was born in robbery, was nurtured in robbery, and has lived through her whole career in and on robbery. Among ethnological mysteries there is none greater than that the proto-Prussians, the Borussi, a squalid non-Teutonic race of Ugro-Finnic stock, never Christianized, never more than half civilized, hailing from some point in Northern Asia, should first have imposed itself on the Teutonic peoples to their utter undoing, and next have led the whole civilized world to the brink of the most frightful catastrophe in human annals.

It was the crime against Poland that enabled

Prussia to absorb in turn Westphalia, Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Austrian Silesia, and Alsace-Lorraine. A just Nemesis, whatever other penalty it inflicted on the Robber Nation, was bound to insist on the disgorgement of her Polish spoil. The historic interest of the Polish question lies in the fact that Prussia throve on Poland's downfall. The practical interest of the Polish question to-day lies in the fact that in a strong Poland, restored to her full heritage—from the Baltic to the Euxine—lies one of the greatest securities to the cause of Civilization. A strong Poland is Europe's advanced post against Eastern aggression; she is needed to do again, if necessary, what her hero, John Sobieski, did in his day. A strong Poland, with other neighbouring States composed of free nations, is an effective barrier to plans of the Mittel-Europa order and to intrigues having Egypt and India for their objective.

Such is the interest which the Polish question possesses for the world at large. Poland's own interest in it is derived from the inalienable right of every people to be free to live its own life. It is unthinkable that a great and noble nation such as the Poles should any longer be denied

the elementary, God-given privilege of its independence. Europe, sadly in arrear with its debt to this long-suffering country, resolved that the great wrong done at Vienna should be wiped out and righted at Versailles.

The author of this essay has stated the case on behalf of his country with an ability and a candour that will carry conviction, and an eloquence that must awaken sympathy. The veteran patriot admits that the history of Poland is a chequered story of prosperity and disaster, that her regrettable internal dissensions rendered her an easy prey to foreign aggression, and that to this day the want of unity amongst her sons may yet prove a grave obstacle to her future well-being. But M. Waliszewski also shows us the other side of the shield. He proves his countrymen to have been far in advance of other nations, not only in their realization of the great principles of national liberty, but in expressing and embodying those principles in concrete institutions and definite organisms. Some, at least, of Poland's troubles were due to her premature liberalism, and to the consequent

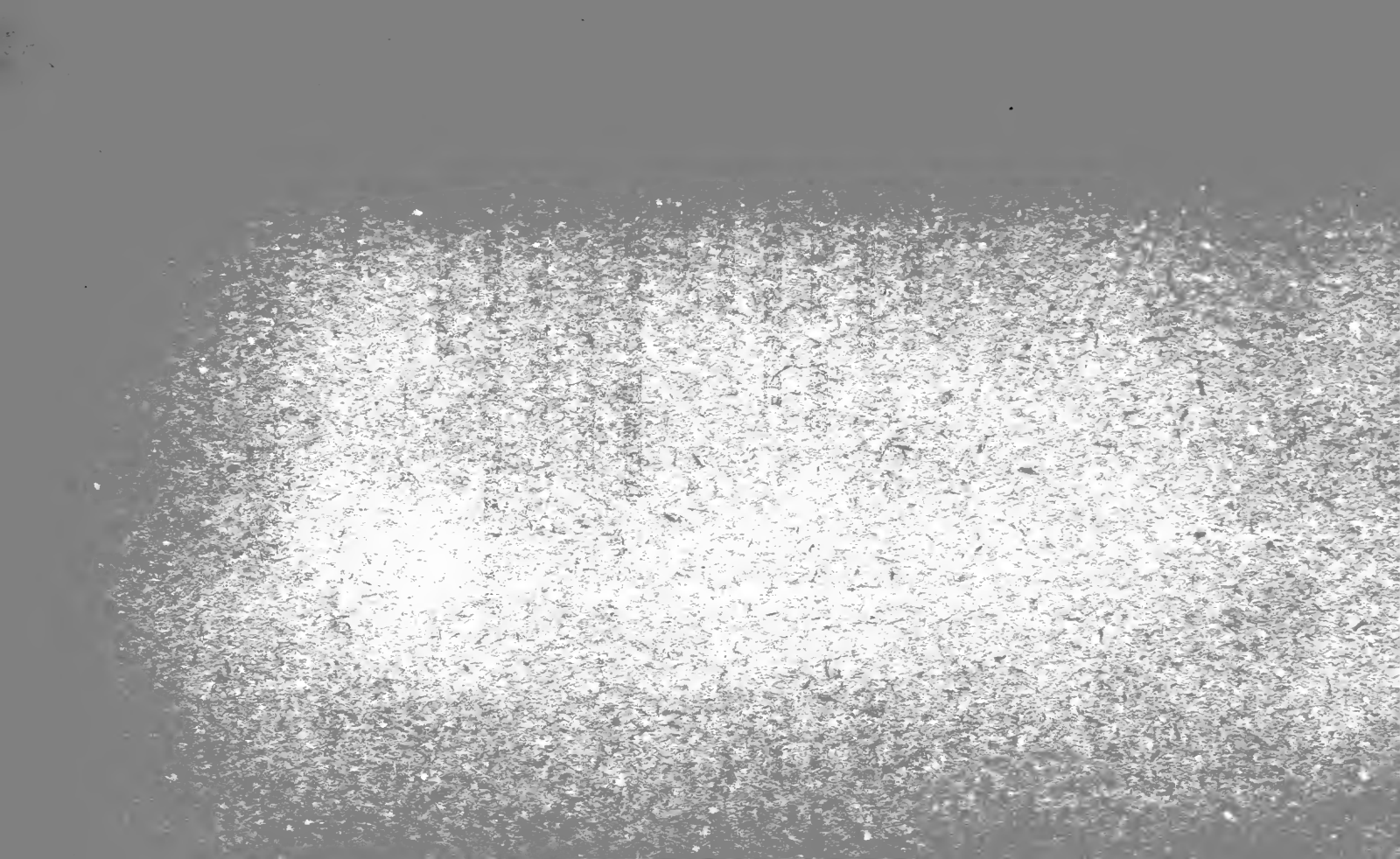
jealousy of absolutist neighbours who regarded her people's love of freedom—admittedly excessive—as making for anarchy.

On the other hand, the ultra-Revolutionists of eighteenth-century France were no less disconcerted to find that in Poland their advanced views found little favour among a people who had learnt by experience to draw a firm and decided line between Reform and Revolution.

Nothing could be more effective than M. Waliszewski's scathing indictment of the tactics of the anti-Polish conspirators, who, having marked down their prey, proceeded by secret agencies to corrupt their victim, to foment "anarchy," and then to make "anarchy" the excuse for intervention. The author's picturesque account of the external causes and internal tendencies which by slow degrees reduced Poland from the rank of a first-rate European Power, deserves attentive study. What he terms the Enigma of Poland consisted in the curious double anomaly of a Republican Constitution in which a King played the part of the merest figure-head; and of a "nobiliary *demos*"—a social caste of land-owning nobility which in status was democratic.

On the whole, M. Waliszewski conveys the impression that Poland was a sheep among wolves; that her people were a simple and confiding folk whose domestic differences weakened their defence against the enemy without; yet withal a race whose history showed fine traits of national character, and whose constancy in unmerited suffering affords good hope, under favourable conditions, of restored prosperity. Whether the conditions will or will not be favourable is the grave question that haunts all Poland's well-wishers.

NOTE.—The State of Poland was founded by Piast, a peasant elected Duke in 842. One of the best sovereigns was Casimir III (the Great), 1333. In 1382 began the dynasty of Jagellon, under whom the frontiers were extended beyond the Dwina and the Dnieper. The splendid reign of Sigismund II lasted from 1548 to 1570. The Crown became elective, and in 1573 choice fell upon Henri de Valois—later Henri III of France. John Sobieski, who conquered the Turks at Vienna in 1683, brought Poland much distinction; but less than a hundred years later the country's ruin was complete. The Confederation of Bar (1768) directed against the Russians, resulted in 1772 in the first partition of Poland between Russia, Prussia, and Austria. A new Constitution was promulgated on May 3, 1791, but a civil war in 1792 gave occasion for a fresh Russian intervention. Betrayed by Prussian chicane, Poland underwent a second dismemberment in 1793, in spite of the brave efforts of King Stanislas (Poniatowski) and Kosciuszko, culminating in the battle of Maciéjowice on October 4, 1794. A third and last partition between Austria, Russia, and Prussia followed in 1795. A national insurrection in 1830 was savagely repressed, and in 1863 a new revolt was put down in less than a year with great severity.



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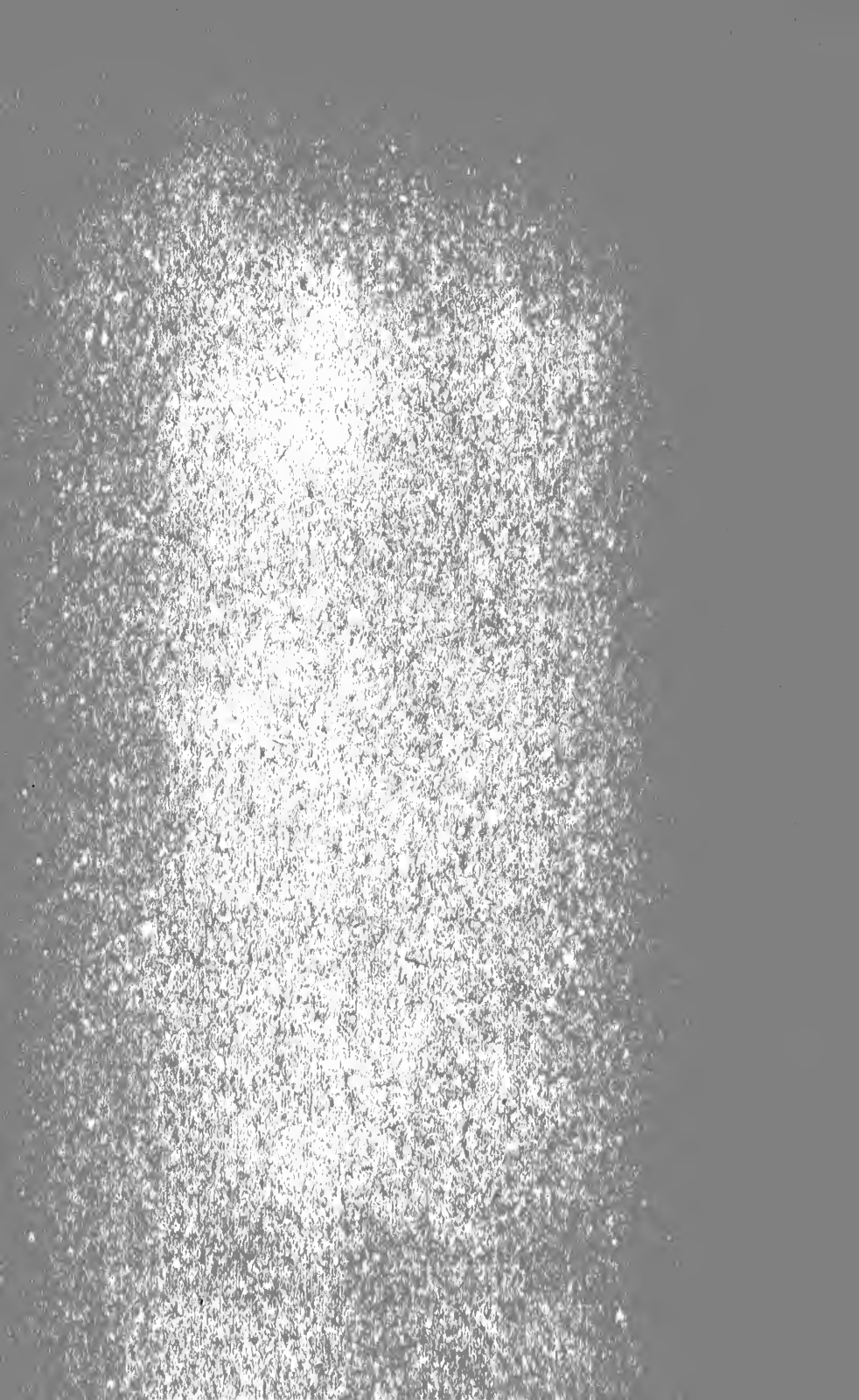

POLAND THE UNKNOWN

INTRODUCTORY

UNKNOWN? Yes, indeed: a figure so grotesquely distorted during a century and a half by persistent misreadings of her sad fate as to be at last hardly recognizable even by herself.

Listen to these words from notes made by Prince Talleyrand at Vienna in 1814:

"From the curse of anarchy nothing could save Poland except an absolutist regime. As no such weapon was available at home it had to be introduced from without: in other words, Poland had to submit to conquest at the hands of her neighbours. Yet the greatly developed prosperity in those parts of Polish territory taken over by nations more advanced than herself in the arts of civilization indicates that, after all, her partition has benefited the population. To give her back her forfeited independence would assuredly plunge her anew into anarchy, and bring about her subjection once more to foreign domination."

A hundred years have passed since Prince Talleyrand's grave and authoritative judgement on our nation swayed the decision of the Congress

in the disposal of her future. With the near approach of a crisis big with her fate, has Poland no cause to fear lest the balance be again weighted against her? True, she can count to-day on many powerful friends on whose triumphs over her enemies she rests all her hopes for the future. Yet the Poles are not too sanguine; they do not forget that the same France who had been linked to their country by many historic ties of interest and sympathy —the France who had for so long stood her faithful friend, and whose successive rulers had in stern disapproval held aloof from every scheme for dividing up Polish territory, and striven to stay its execution—was also the France in whose name Talleyrand pronounced his damnatory verdict. It was indeed a sinister surprise that awaited her at Vienna when this new attitude was adopted by the first plenipotentiary of France at the Congress.

The effect of the Prince's opinion upon the Polish patriots was instantaneous. At once there broke out indignant protests from the victims who saw their cause wrecked and abandoned; this fatal verdict, although it evoked among them a tumult of emotion and discussion —marked, it is true, by certain excesses—was by some of them finally accepted and even exaggerated. Of all the tragic experiences through which the Polish nation had lived since 1772,

this was the least easy to understand and the most difficult to bear.

During the next forty years the state of Poland was hardly changed. But during the latter half of last century there arose a school of Polish historians who acquired a directing influence in the domain of domestic politics. These savants initiated among their countrymen an historical propaganda which, however well-meant, represented the facts of their nation's past in a light at once humiliating and hopeless.

Surpassing in bitterness even Talleyrand's censoriousness, they proclaimed unabashed that Poland had only herself to thank for the extinction of her national polity. They laid the entire responsibility for the disaster on her innate ineptitude, on her proved inability to set up a stable Government, on her light-minded toleration within her borders of wild disorder and unbridled indiscipline.

From this attitude of indiscriminate condemnation of their own forefathers to that of justifying the violent disruption of their native land was but a step. Having given ear to one enemy falsehood they were ready to listen to another. It was coolly pretended by the perpetrators of the partition that their victim's silence gave consent—that she had accorded their deed a tacit sanction. In other words, they asked the world to believe that Poland's

silent non-resistance must be taken to imply an active and spontaneous approval!

The source and genesis of this convenient theory are easily traceable: *Is fecit cui prodest* —the author of a deed is he who has most to gain by it. The alien conquest not only imposed foreign rulers; it also inflicted foreign educators. A school of history was set up at Cracow, in close affiliation with German and Russian universities, whose influence was discernible in its methodical and systematic propaganda. Everywhere by its agency was industriously spread the tale of Poland's proved unworthiness to enjoy political independence. Very soon the legend, gathering strength and substance by repetition, was erected into a formal dogma, to be enforced and accepted by word of command; and any one presuming to repudiate or question it was made to feel what it was to incur the unappeasable displeasure of the supreme educational authority.

By way of illustration, the present writer ventures to recount an unlucky experience of his own, not specially important in itself, yet significant of the situation prevailing a generation ago. As member of an Historical Commission appointed by the Academy of Sciences at Cracow, he was entrusted with the compilation of an historical work to be published in six volumes. Of these the first three had already been issued, and the fourth was ready for the press, when

both author and book were suddenly placed under the Academy's ban. For thirty years the manuscript of the three unpublished volumes has been impounded by the Academy authorities, and the writer has never been permitted to hear anything more of them or of their fate.

His relations with the scientific and literary world being thus severed, he sought to join up the lost connexion through the instrumentality of an Historical Review to which he had for some years been a regular contributor—only to find, however, that this publication had in its turn fallen into disgrace with Cracow officialdom, and its directors notified that all future relations between it and the excommunicated offender were peremptorily forbidden. The cause of all this hostility was that the author, on being invited to a scientific congress, had proposed to read a paper containing criticisms of certain members of the Cracow professoriate, whose pretensions to dogmatize seemed comparable to those of the recently issued Papal *Syllabus*.

It was not in the physical and material order only that Poland suffered by the partition of 1772–95; that crime had its more deadly counterpart in a lowering of the whole national moral. Hence the strange docility with which too many Poles consented to bear arms under the flags of their oppressors, and submitted to be used as pawns in their political game. The theory

propounded by alien historians to account for Poland's fall continued to be steadily pressed by the German instructors, in order to hoodwink the Poles and complete their moral subjection. The attempt to poison the wells of patriotism was the corollary of the movement which brought about Poland's dissolution as a State; and its success in securing popular adhesion in the very heart of the ancient kingdom exhibits the penetrative ingenuity with which the arch-conspirators acquired influence over their Polish subjects, even where their *régime* might seem in later times to have taken on a more liberal form. It is of the first importance that these facts should be brought home to every Pole and friend of Poland, because upon them hinges the success of every enterprise on behalf of the national restoration.

That before the Poles lost their independence the country had been plunged in anarchy is unhappily too true; but to allege that they chose an anarchical existence or were constitutionally prone to political disorder is a gross libel. What is more—it is by no means historically certain that anarchy was the actual cause of their undoing: the point is reserved for discussion later. But, at any rate, the unfortunate people were so little pleased with their chaotic condition that they at last made the most desperate efforts to escape from it.

By degrees the campaign of German calumny did its evil work. Those whom it was meant to beguile came at last to credit the slanders continuously uttered against their country, and crediting them actually took an active part in giving them currency. The irony of the situation lay in this fact—that Poland's accusers had themselves worked to produce the very mischief for which they now laid the blame on her. This "anarchy" over which they waxed so fierce in denunciation was of their own skilled manufacture.

In hope of the very catastrophe which it ultimately served to bring about, the poison of anarchy was stealthily working in Poland during nearly the whole of the eighteenth century. It was disseminated by the same alien and destructive agencies whose most useful instrument it later became. Anarchy within was of set purpose fostered as a preparation and pretext for conquest from without.

If the Poles themselves contributed—as, no doubt, they did—to further this fatal policy, it was largely due to the pressure of adverse circumstances. They were hindered from husbanding their resources to meet the expenses of an establishment grown too sumptuous; they were also debarred from framing for themselves political institutions suited to that ardent longing for personal freedom which they had contracted

amidst earlier and more propitious conditions of existence.

During the whole of her tragic experience Poland was at the mercy of an ever-shifting play of chances, which after forming many combinations were doubtless capable of shaping many more. In the reconstituted Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Polish State, as it had hitherto existed, found no place. And yet, of this Europe—from which Poland was left out—how much still survives to-day? On the other hand, the Polish idea is not dead. Nobody, it is true, contemplates the resuscitation of the old Poland of the Confederation and the *liberum veto*. But the question of the re-establishment of the Polish State figures in the *ordre du jour* of international politics. It is recognized as an integral part of that general plan of political reconstruction which must of necessity be faced at the end of the present world-crisis. A Europe without Poland has succeeded so ill that even the original conspirators against the life of the unhappy Republic were fain during the Great War to offer her reparation; and there is at least some likelihood that—provided her neighbours are to be the same as before—Poland will no longer find them either as able or as willing to injure her as of old.

The problem resolves itself into one of equating

the new Europe now emerging from the crucible of war with the new Poland which it is proposed to reconstruct—of bringing the revived Polish Republic into right relation with the general European rearrangement, while permitting full scope to her people's abounding vitality. The solution will be the task of the Peace Congress, but the price which the Polish nation has paid in suffering, in order to obtain liberation from a foreign yoke, entitles it to ask that the settlement shall not be a mere hasty and maladroit expedient for building a house of cards on the ruins of the past.

What the Poland of to-morrow needs for her life can be determined only by a deepened knowledge of what it was that killed the Poland of yesterday. It is now essential that the most widely received data of Polish history should be subjected to drastic revision. For nearly a century and a half the vanquished nation of 1772–1795 has presented to the world, not her own face, but a mask imposed on her by her conquerors to disguise their handiwork. They have almost succeeded in depriving her of the capacity for self-recognition, and the friends of Poland demand that the decisive hour, now about to strike, shall give the signal for the mask to be dropped. To enforce that righteous and insistent demand is the aim of the pages which follow. Their substance is partly borrowed from

a work published by the author in Polish in 1890 under the title of *Poland and Europe*, in development of the thesis which, as already related, earned an anathema from the Cracow Academy, under the presidency of an Austrian Archduke.

CHAPTER I

THE ENIGMA OF A NATION'S FATE

§ 1

Down to about the middle of the last century, Poland, the victim not of her vices but of her exceptional virtues, was, as Mickiewicz and Towianski taught, "the Christ among nations." The doctrine of a Messianic function preached by her prophets was accepted by their countrymen for several generations. Yet even in the pleiad to which the author of the *Books of the Polish Pilgrimage* belonged, there was another poet who denounced his people as "the peacock and popinjay of nations." * Here we already note the fruit of alien teaching; and ever since, in the minds of most Poles, the appeal of their past has steadily deteriorated, passing from the heroic image of the liberator of Vienna † to the less glorious, though not altogether unsympathetic, figure of the orator at general or local assemblies, the eloquent champion of every kind of liberty, to whom loud boasting is more congenial than quiet action, of whom it cannot even be said that he is a good citizen.

* Slowacki. † Sobieski.

The bitter sense of disillusion engendered by the failure in 1863 of Poland's last struggle for independence settled down into the gloom of pessimism. There was a decline of sensational patriotism. The quondam hero of Quixotic enterprise, once resplendent as an archangel with wings extended behind his silvery bright armour, was exhibited on the cinema-screen of history shrinking and shrivelling by degrees into the shape and semblance of a puppet. Fonder of clanking his sabre than of unsheathing it, pot-valiant rather than brave, preferring quarrelling to fighting; professing an inflated devotion to liberty, but confounding it with licence and defiant of all discipline; indolent and work-shy, alternately spendthrift and needy, without means of subsistence, as without place in the framework of modern civilization!

To a certain extent, the general sense of the people rejected this vision, which was marked by the official stamp of the school of Cracow. I may invoke the testimony of Sienkiewicz's very popular works. Yet even among the characters which the famous novelist has created, side by side with his illusive adaptations of the figures of Dumas the elder, the most original and vital, in spite of its echoes of Quixote and Falstaff, is the Zagloba of *Par le Fer et par le Feu*, and he is a Pole who approximates closely to the type accredited by the pundits of Cracow.

In every stage of its career the Polish people has been the conscious possessor, for good or evil, of a quality which differentiates it from all its neighbours, which marks it as an exception among the nations. The national sentiment has instinctively fixed on this fact to explain an ill-fortune which it wishes also to believe exceptional. Nor was the Polish nation herein wholly self-deceived. In a world strewn with the *débris* of empires that have disappeared, Poland carries within her something all her own, on which her future in great part depends.

As yet, however, not one of the attempts to define this *quidquid unicum*—this unique trait—has commanded general assent. The conjectures put forward have been many; none of them will bear examination. Early in the eighteenth century a German publicist stated his theory. He wrote that Poland was the only nation to adopt a federal system—*Non alia gens praeter Polonam confoederationes colit*—ignoring the observation made long before by a fellow-countryman, with reference to the divided and chaotic Germany of that day, to the effect that in view of the troubles besetting the State a federative arrangement was a pressing necessity—*Ubi autem respublica laborat, utique foedera necessaria sunt.*

More recently a Russian historian has tried his hand at solving Poland's riddle. He finds in

her system a double trait of exceptional—or even, as he says, unexampled—peculiarity. In the composition and character of the Polish Parliament—wrongly styled a "Congress"—he notes, on the one hand, that it was nothing but the instrument and representative of a single class, the *noblesse*, and on the other, that the deputies were reduced to the status of simple delegates of the local provincial assemblies.

Now it may be fairly arguable what exact share of power the middle class enjoyed in the political life of ancient Poland; but the idea of its complete exclusion is outside discussion. The position of greater or less privilege occupied by one or other social stratum—aristocratic in France, democratic in the Netherlands—is one of the common facts of European history. As to the *rôle* played by provincial autonomy in Poland, an eighteenth-century critic, by no means biased in favour of his country's *régime*, has contrasted it with the rights enjoyed by the cantons of Switzerland and the Dutch United Provinces respectively, pointing out that in these republics the provincial privileges counted for much more in the legislative order, in relation to the central authority, than even the pretensions of the Polish nobiliary communes, which never ventured to claim certain functions of sovereignty.

Polish institutions may have been abnormal

and even paradoxical in their character, but it is unfair to judge them merely from certain details of the form they assumed or of the manner of their working. In point of fact there has never been any uniformity in the political constitutions of the several civilized countries. Mere speculations as to the abstract superiority of one form of government over another have received much less attention than the concrete question whether this form or that were fitted to a particular set of circumstances—whether, for example, a republican *régime* might be better suited for small States than for larger ones. Rousseau himself acknowledged that, as regards the danger attendant on too great territorial expansion, republics ran as much risk as monarchies.

Evidently the solution of the Polish problem must be sought elsewhere. Poland, as in her destiny, so in her political life, contrasted sharply with neighbouring countries. But to analyse the nature of the dissimilarity and to grasp its true significance, it is necessary to search below the surface of things, to get behind mere forms, to penetrate into that which constitutes the basis of all individual history, to get to know the ideas, traditions, manners—the very soul and genius—of the nation.

The misfortunes of Poland were not due either to the elective nature of the monarchy or to the

abuse of the *liberum veto* in the Diet. As to the latter, the systematic obstruction practised in various Parliaments is just as powerful an instrument of opposition as the Polish right to "call for a unanimous vote."

The elective principle lies at the root of every fresh dynasty. Neither the first of the Romanoffs in 1613 nor Peter the Great's niece in 1730 obtained the Russian throne save by virtue of a constitutional compact. Yet the compact did not hinder either of them from exercising that absolute power which Talleyrand declared to be indispensable for the Polish State.

But it may be asked why no King of Poland ever succeeded in obtaining absolute power—either a king claiming Divine Right like the son of Catharine de' Medici; or the inheritor of an autocracy such as was wielded in Sweden by the first Vasa; or a successful soldier, like Sobieski; or even a disciple of Machiavelli, like Augustus the Strong, who was hampered neither by scruples in planning his designs nor by hesitation in carrying them out. Poland possessed, on the one hand, a turbulent and powerful *noblesse*, and, on the other, a *bourgeoisie* whose power was only slightly developed—or rather, whose political growth had been arrested after a brilliant period of expansion, of which the fifteenth century has left sundry traces. But why?

The Polish middle class lost the political power which it had once possessed. How did this happen? How could this Third Party—unlike the *Popolani* of Florence, who put up a gallant struggle for their privileges—allow itself unresistingly to be dispossessed of rights it had once acquired? Why—unlike the *Comuñeros* of Spain—did the Polish *bourgeoisie* tamely submit to be strangled without having suffered defeat on any field of Villalar? This it is which it concerns us to know, and which is now to form the subject of our inquiry.

§ 2

To this problem of the loss by the *bourgeoisie* of rights they had once enjoyed the historians of the Cracow school have offered a solution which, unsatisfying as it is, merits attention as embodying one undoubted truth. The failure of the Polish middle classes to hold their own is traced to the arrest of the nation's growth at the opening of the sixteenth century, when her desperate attempt to keep pace with her European rivals was succeeded by a disastrous and rapid retrogression. It is represented that those later changes in her political system, which she complacently regarded in the light of conquests achieved by the spirit of liberty, were merely phases of a reaction towards an effete mediævalism. At the very time when Europe, after

giving these expedients a trial, had discarded them for others better adapted to new requirements, Poland—it is said—must needs borrow them for her own. Seized with a spirit of irrational conservatism, transformed into a political mummy, she was stiffened into absolute immobility for the space of two centuries.

Such is the Cracovian theory. The cardinal objection to this "explanation" is that it demands another. If this be indeed the true account, we have next to explain the sequence, as puzzling as it is discouraging, of, first, a sudden inhibition of all vital functions; next, a retrograde movement; and finally, a torpor from which there is no awakening. Certainly, an organism that had undergone a similar series of experiences would have reached a condition absolutely hopeless.

It is some consolation to reflect that this dismal suggestion rests on nothing better than partisan prej dice. It is dictated by a mental prepossession which should have no place in an historical inquiry. A purely speculative theory, framed independently of all evidence, belongs not to the historical but to the political order. In this instance it is rooted in a desire, not to elucidate facts of history, but to support foregone conclusions on the question of responsibility. There lies behind it a fixed determination to

exculpate the aggressors and to shift the blame on to the Poles of the sixteenth century. It is alleged that the Poles of that age had lost the breadth of outlook, the nobleness of aspiration, which once had possessed the soul of their nation. These were the degenerates who, at the time of Henry III's accession, hastily "improvised" the "anarchical" constitution of 1573, and consented to become subservient to its antiquated provisions.

Such an "explanation" really explains nothing. We are not told how and why it came about that this sinister outburst—whether of blindness or of folly—seized the Poles of the sixteenth century. The reply to so pertinent an inquiry would be difficult; it is therefore quietly shelved and the discussion, with convenient suddenness, takes a fresh turn. The aid of other conceivable causes is invoked to account for the phenomena before us—such as the tardiness of Poland's entry into the arena of Western civilization and her consequent incapacity to set herself on a level with her rivals; the unfortunate fruits of Poland's union with Lithuania; the diversion of Poland's living forces to, and their ultimate exhaustion by, a scheme of colonization; finally, the effect on Poland of the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, and the blocking of the chief line of communication between East and West, which, traversing Poland, brought it

nearer to the Western centres of wealth and culture.

These arguments mark an interesting advance beyond the data relied on by the older school of Lelewel and Naruszewicz; but they run quite counter to the conclusions they were summoned to support. As for the attempt to represent the union of Poland with Lithuania and its consequences as "an historic fatality," Poland had no way of escape from this territorial enlargement, or from the very heavy burdens which it entailed on her. Why should the Poles be upbraided for the expenditure of their resources that was thus incurred? However, to expect reasonable argument on this point is like looking for logic in a present-day *communiqué* from Wolff's Agency—the source of inspiration being in both cases the same!

In 1879 one of the shining lights of the Cracow school—who afterwards threw over science for politics and took rank among the most devoted servants of the Habsburg Monarchy—commended as an improved manual of Polish history a book published at Gotha in 1840–1863 by Roepell and Caro. This had already been authorized by the Cracow professoriate as a textbook, notwithstanding its notoriously partisan character. Like favour was extended to the works of Zeisberg and Voigt, and to the lectures of German theorists such as Hüppe, Beer, and

von der Bruggen. The propaganda was reinforced by teaching brought from the German universities and upheld by examples drawn from German public life. Later prominence was given to ideas derived from Russian writers, such as Kostomarov, Soloviov, Ilovaiski, and Oumaniets, who have applied themselves to Polish history, specially with a view to examining the causes which worked for Poland's unhappy experience.

The influence of Russian thought rather than German seemed at a subsequent period to become dominant. By her own writers Poland's treatment of her Ruthenian population is depicted in darker colours than by any of the Germans, their own view being in substantial agreement with that of the Russians. Apparently the Polish authors, confronted by these discordant presentations of the facts, and despairing of the possibility of combining them harmoniously, decided to follow the Russian lead in the main; some of the German authorities being drawn upon in respect of particular points.

The suggestion as to the tardiness of Poland's cultural development is borrowed from Hüppe, and that of its subsequent setback comes from von Smitt. Here, however, recourse is had once more to Russian authorities. On the altered bearings of Polish politics after the fifteenth century, and the relative advantage which would have accrued to Poland by sacri-

ficing the Baltic for the Black Sea, or *vice versa*, the Cracow disciples separate themselves from German teaching, and choose the guidance of the Russian. This preference shows itself particularly in their adoption of the idea that Poland was "charged with an historic mission" to the country between the Vistula and the Elbe, and that it was her refusal of that "mission" that wrought her downfall.

On such points Polish opinion, however, is not unanimous; it hovers between its twofold sources, Teutonic and Muscovite. Breaking with his Cracow fellow-pupils, the historian Kalinka is inclined to attribute the shortcomings in the national life of bygone Poland less to any faultiness in the forms of its State organization than to constitutional defects in the character of its people. Korzon, outbidding his *confrère*, goes so far as to maintain that the true cause of his country's decadence lay wholly within the moral order. Both writers take their cue from Soloviov, Kostomarov, Ilovaiski, and De Poulé.

Some of our scribes are not content with gathering from these sources a number of scientific data of questionable value. They have followed the tendencies and borrowed the watch words, imbibed the convictions and adopted the maxims, current among writers such as Hüppe, who dedicated his books to Bismarck, and Oumaniets, who complacently accepted the

steady Russianizing of the provinces torn from Poland. The writings of either author are stamped with the mark of their origin. This school's fundamental dogma is the omnipotence of the God-State, as formulated by Hegel; it inculcates the worship of Force as emanating from the State and having, indeed, no other possible source, and holds up to deepest scorn and contempt, or even regards as a positive delinquent, any unfortunate who hesitates to acknowledge the State as the sole generator of all potential energy.

It is generally agreed that Poland was the victim of circumstances beyond her control; she might surely claim as her just due to be regarded with some measure of sympathetic pity. A people so situated might well ask to be exempt from an unduly severe criticism. But for Poland's foreign judges to acknowledge this would involve a fatal admission; it would amount to a confession that her treatment in 1772–95 was on her side undeserved and was therefore unjust on theirs. It is easily understood that Poland's German and Russian masters could never endure, still less endorse, this proposition. Even their Polish disciples have—though for other reasons—found it repugnant to them.

§ 3

This disposition of our Polish writers, faulty as we may deem it, and certainly unfortunate in its consequences, need not be set down to unworthy motives. The men of whom we speak were for the most part sincere patriots. Acting in the double capacity of political leaders and directors of public education, they adopted a view of their country's position which appeared to contain an element of edification, and might even be made a vehicle for inculcating that moral discipline which Fichte accounted Divine.

It was hoped to persuade the Poles that all their troubles originated in the defects of their national character. The German and Russian inventors of the tale set store on its ready adaptability to a twofold purpose. It could do duty in justification of the *fait accompli*, the spoliation of Poland, and as an argument against any future attempt to force the robbers to disgorge their spoil. And next, the Poles might with its aid be brought to realize that their bounden duty was to make good in the future the errors of their past, and meanwhile in the present to receive with due submissiveness whatever regulations might from time to time be imposed upon them.

Towards the attainment of this double aim, the history of ancient Poland—properly manipu-

lated in the manner of the Hüppes and Ilovaiskis —offered an inexhaustible source of moral instruction. The Polish writers who had become apt pupils of anti-Polish teachers had no scruple in making that history a source of inspiration— or even, as one of them observed, an actual "accomplice" in carrying out their political purpose. The better to attain this end, they thought it legitimate to seek as guides those in whom their ancestors had found conquerors.

But upon a slope so slippery they were bound to come to grief. The hypnotic influences to which they had too easily surrendered led them still further astray both intellectually and morally. In an evil hour they accepted German method, the leading expression of Teutonic mentality. The countrymen of Treitschke and Bernhardi acknowledge but one infallible test for all results of scientific inquiry. From the mass of mere facts they extract an underlying entity which they choose to call "truth," but always with the proviso that "true" is to mean "useful."

According to a native historian—who unhappily took a different tone ultimately—the adaptation of this scientific pragmatism to Polish history permitted German teachers to deliver anatomical lectures on the *corpus vile* of Poland, by way of demonstrating the nefarious character of blows aimed at the State's claim to omnipo-

tence. To the Prussian Junkers it furnished arguments against each and every manifestation of the liberal spirit, and gave the Hakatists of the eastern border of the German Empire an excuse for suppressing the national claims of the Posen peasants. It led the Polish disciples of German teachers to attempt on "historiosophic" principles a thorough reconstruction of their past, bringing Poland's "brilliant" period to an end in the sixteenth century, and including all the splendours and glories of the subsequent epoch, with its Sigismund, its Bathory, and its Sobieski, within one and the same "vicious circle" of errors and crimes, of folly and dejection, which prepared the inevitable catastrophe.

It can be shown that, even while the national self-realization of the Poles was at its height, this caricature of their history steadily gained acceptance. Nevertheless it was not without a painful struggle that the older and truer ideas were displaced by the new. The downward progress of the national thought is plainly set forth in the writings of Szujski, the most eminent member of the historic school to which he belonged, a man of equal clearness of vision and generosity of heart, whom the present writer reveres as his mentor and esteems as his friend. In 1868 Szujski rebelled against the teaching of Hüppe, refusing to admit what he denounced as

the anachronism imputed to the Polish institutions of the eighteenth century. This allegation —that the immature Polish nation was in every respect so behind the age as to be incapable of taking shape as a modern State—has since, with the national acquiescence, become the primary article of the New Evangel preached to our own generation.

Against it, however, Szujski was by 1868 in open revolt, declaring that its refutation was to be found in the very wording of Hüppe's theories, notably the latter's conception of Polish aristocracy, which the German writer identified with that of citizenship, thus making the latter posterior to it historically. Szujski struck a higher note when he asked whether "some of the principles professed by the Poles in the course of their political existence were not destined one day to impose themselves on the entire world—to its lasting benefit." He instanced Poland's federative union with Lithuania as adumbrating a plan for the general federation of peoples for common defence, thus anticipating the conception of a League of Nations which finds a place in present-day ideas; the repudiation of a policy of conquest, and the granting of religious toleration. It gave him infinite pleasure to anticipate that "in the Republican constitution of ancient Poland—whose chief defect was not its archaism, but its precocity—future generations would give

due credit to a society which, scorning the maxim *Bellum omnium contra omnes*, dared to set up an ideal of international peace and concord."

This sanguine forecast came naturally from an historian who, only a year or two earlier, had claimed for his nation that it had sown a tiny seed destined to fructify amidst the cataclysm which he foresaw coming upon Europe. A prophet of evil, he was amply justified by the event. In 1865 he had written, "The Polish Monarchy, as transformed by the Constitution of May 3, 1791, was the grafting of a budding of liberty upon an ancient stock. Soon the two powerful movements, the French Revolution and the Polish Constitutional reform, would have met together and shaken the world. Hence the thrill of delight with which we recall that glorious hour, of which the doctrinaire prejudice of the extremists seeks to heal us—as if it were a malady."

Finally, when the doctrine thus denounced had overcome his truer instincts, and he set himself to show that liberty—as an earlier generation had conceived of it—was little better than a mask to conceal unwelcome realities, some remnant of his former faith and pride impelled him to pay homage to, and to bring out in bold relief, the many proofs of valour, energy, and intelligence, exhibited by the Polish people during the hope-

less period of decay dating from 1573. In these his sanguine spirit saw a sure pledge of future resurrection.

No such hopes, however, uplifted the writers who succeeded him. "Our whole history since the sixteenth century," writes one of them, "presents the appearance of youthful levity—an indulgence in childish pranks. It is no fault of the historian if, ranging over two centuries, he fails to light upon a single trait of real grandeur or genuine wisdom. Had Poland possessed even one truly great man, it might have been the saving of us. But none such was to be found. We were face to face with universal disintegration and ruin; there was a general paralysis of faculties, a complete disappearance of all talent. There were disquieting symptoms of a progressive weakening of political character, and not a few ominous signs of a serious lowering of the standard of public life. The gravest errors were permitted to pass uncorrected, and things worse than errors were too easily condoned. The whole community seemed struck with a mental blindness, an inability to scent danger, which began by rebuffing every offer of outside aid, and ended by driving the nation to the madness of self-destruction. Our boasted liberty was a mere nickname for anarchy. Our religious toleration was but a cloak for the total absence of strong conviction. Our professed 'love of peace'

was meant to disguise our pusillanimity and conceal our ineptitude for war."

Certainly our German and Russian instructors had good reason to be satisfied with their handiwork. Every attempt to restore Polish nationality was met by a formidable opposition—above all, in the minds of the very people whom national restoration was designed to benefit. No nation can continue to live which lacks faith in itself; the harsh judgements—even the insults—which Poland's own children have been led to fling at her past do not allow her so much as the poor benefit of extenuating circumstances. The accusations brought against her can be formulated in the very terms employed by several Polish writers. Here is the indictment, together with an outline of the defence:

"Thou—younger than thy neighbours because less advanced in civilization—why hast thou lacked the wisdom to follow in their footsteps by adopting their ways of thinking and mode of life?"

"I could not: the forced union with Lithuania weighed me down. I have been the victim of an exceptional situation which, though it demanded from me an effort, did not permit me to put it forth. Thou hast said it thyself."

"Wrong! What was said was only meant to prove to thee that thou couldst not rank

thyself as on an equality with thy neighbours, either of the East or of the West, or claim to enjoy like them an independent existence. Every nation has had to pass through trials like thine, and unlike thee has triumphed over them. Why has thou succumbed ? "

" Because I was weaker than any of them. By a series of errors and a long misunderstanding of the laws which regulate the collective existence and development of men, I was placed outside the possibility of self-defence. Talent, character, political instinct, money and armed force —of all these resources I was deprived. Finally, fixed and without power to move, save only when shaken by convulsions, I was all but dead. Thyself hast said so. How then should I resist a combined assault of my mighty neighbours ? "

" Wrong again ! In point of neither wealth, nor of intelligence, nor of numerical strength did any of thy neighbours surpass thee. Nor did there exist between them any pact to injure thee. On the contrary, being split up by quarrels, it was they who were in danger. And, indeed, more than one of them were even disposed to come to thine aid ; but thou didst repulse every offer of assistance, being unwilling to fight in good earnest. Thy culpability is therefore fully made clear, and thou canst not dispute it."

Such has been the gist of the accusation—

much of it quoted textually—and of the rejoinder to it. There is some ground for apprehension lest, in another and more fateful inquiry about to be made into her condition and her claims, Poland's case may be prejudiced by allegations similar to these, the effect of which has indeed already been felt during these critical times.

§ 4

There is no use in denying that the Polish people as a whole have failed to rise to the occasion during the Great War. Uncertain what course to follow, torn by conflicting impulses, they have been drawn in contrary directions—either by sympathy with the democratic nations of the West, or by the lure of an unworthy compromise with Poland's worst enemies. What might not have been effected by some twenty-five millions of Poles, ranged under one flag and united in the impetuous rush to serve the Right—if not materially at least morally—and to help on the triumph of the great cause with which their own is inseparably bound up!

That is what might have been. What actually happened was that some Polish legions were thrown into the firing-line under the French command in Champagne against the Germans, and that other Polish legions were acting under the orders of a pseudo-Polish Government im-

provised by the Germans in Warsaw; while various Polish Committees scattered over Europe and America were incoherently disputing over the privilege of representing the national unity. Divided among themselves, bearing arms against each other, the Poles did little collectively to regain their nation's freedom.

They were sorely perplexed as to their course; there was indeed room for perplexity: not that they could possibly hesitate between the rival benefactors who were courting them from either side of the battle-front. And yet, however flattering might be the promises made them by either, could they help recalling the cruel disappointments they had to endure from the days of Alexander I and Napoleon I down to those of Napoleon III, and onward to the present day? Was there no ground for disquiet at the vagueness and want of precision in the terms offered? What were to be the frontiers of the new Poland? What kind of Germany and what kind of Austria and how many different new Russias would she have to contend with for those frontiers? How much real independence was to be guaranteed to her? And when one of the most authoritative spokesmen promised Poland "independence" and "autonomy," both at once, what was to be thought of such an announcement? Could the Chief of a State specially expert in questions of public right be ignorant of the

mutual incompatibility of these two *régimes*? It surpassed belief that the Government of the United States should either identify "autonomy" with "independence," or else should never even have heard of an autonomous portion of Poland under Austrian domination—namely, Galicia, whose position was not in the least independent. Still more surprising was the interpretation placed on President Wilson's words by the American Ambassador in Berlin, Mr. Gerard, who informed the Poles that the Poland promised them was not to be such as she had once been at any particular period, but "as she had been constituted by Germany and Austria during the war." The Ambassador's words recall the sentiment uttered by another illustrious member of his profession, that language had been given to man in order to conceal his thoughts! But, since Mr. Gerard spoke, the Poles have learnt from one who speaks with equal authority that their country is to be given back to them "in the framework of its historic limits." But this, like many a formula, is liable to very diverse interpretations, and those whom the matter concerns most nearly have bought with their blood the right—while their tragic experiences impose on them the duty—of maintaining a mistrustful and prudential caution.

A hundred years ago—as was recently again the case—two groups of belligerents vied with

each other in claiming the privilege of presiding over a restoration of Polish independence, and in seeking the active help of the Poles in effecting it. The patriot Kosciuszko declined the proposal, and the event demonstrated his wisdom.

There might seem some warrant for reproaching the Poles of to-day with depending less on themselves than on the favour of others—as though a free people's right to live were something to be begged for with outstretched hand—like alms! Yet, if Poland has been backward in self-help, is it not quite natural that, after bearing so terrible a burden of sorrow for one hundred and fifty years, she should lack the necessary resiliency? Was it not inevitable that she should bend under it, and that her energies should grow slack? Her enemies had worked busily to enfeeble her, and as a climax they struck with brutal cunning at the source of her strength when they humiliated their victim and lowered her in her own eyes.

Small wonder indeed that a people thus depressed, demoralized, and self-abased, should have been unable to steady its nerves amid events trying enough to baffle the cleverest and bravest. Handicapped by ignorance, misled by evil counsels, bewildered by insidious suggestions, they were led to expect at the hands of their persecutors, if nothing actually good, yet something less bad than hitherto.

Whether these perplexed souls were ever very

numerous is a point to be considered later; there were at best too many of them. But to elevate the whole Polish nation to the level of its environment, to enable it to cope with new circumstances and new duties, there is needed something which neither political independence, nor an army, nor a fleet, nor financial resources can give. The people must be fortified with that firm faith in itself and its future of which its dastardly oppressors have contrived to rob it.

This task is no easy one. To try to reason the matter out is to find yourself up against that mixture of truth and falsehood, that amalgam of fraud and truculence, which Germany has brought to such a pitch of perfection. But the thing has to be done, and there is only one way to do it. The self-contradictions of the old Polish political system have been made the most of by enemy writers for their own ends, and to lend countenance to their own misrepresentations. To unveil the true story of Poland, so misunderstood and so obscured by prejudice even among the Poles themselves—to present it in its simplicity and in its truth—this is the one supreme need of the hour.

CHAPTER II

THE POLISH PARADOX

§ 1

Of Szujski, Kalinka, and even his Austrian Excellency, M. Bobrzynski, no one would say they were ignorant or of poor abilities. Their patriotism is equally beyond question, although one of them has sometimes seemed obscure in his style. All three of these leaders, as well as their disciples, have done good work as historians. Choosing their own country's past as their field of study, they have on the whole, and in spite of certain erratic judgements, shown great penetration in reconstructing some parts of Polish history, and in shedding much needed light on other parts. The older writers used to fix ancient Poland's high-water mark of greatness and prosperity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—the Golden Age of the Sigismunds and of Bathory, of a flourishing national literature, of victorious campaigns which planted the flag of Poland on the Kremlin. The newer school of history has rightly pushed back this culminating-point nearly two hundred years. The mid-fifteenth-century Poland and the Poland of the

end of the sixteenth century are so diverse from each other as only with difficulty to be recognized as the same country.

The earlier Poland made great strides to keep pace with its neighbours in the advance of civilization; it surpassed them in the organized constitution and consolidation of its political unity. As Szujski observes, "The work of Ladislas Lokietek (1320–1333) and of Casimir the Great (1333–1370) was a century and a half in advance of the organizing activities of Louis XI in France, of Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain, of Henry VII in England; it anticipated by two centuries the efforts of Maximilian in the same direction."

This was the Poland that played a leading part in the life of Europe at that time: materially, it took recognized rank among the Great Powers; morally, with its university of Cracow founded in 1360, it held its place as one of the principal factors in the intellectual, scientific, and religious movement of the time. The other and later Poland, notwithstanding the greater splendours with which it in some ways seemed to be invested, is seen on close examination to have been already on the verge of decline—cut off, too, from the Western world by an ever-rising and ever-widening barrier. In a political sense Poland remained an imposing figure, but no longer European. Wearing an air that was

markedly Oriental, almost Asiatic, she ceased to count in the things which concern Western cultivation.

Her part in the general life of Europe, so far as she still participated in it at all, was that of a mere satellite, now drawn into the orbit of French or Austrian politics, now gravitating towards the centres of Italian or French culture. In 1434, at the Council of Basle, the Poland of the early Jagellons took a leading part in the politico-religious strife which divided the Catholic world, and on which was staked the whole future of the Papacy—the struggle between the rival pretensions of Felix V and Eugene IV. The memorandum drawn up by the doctors of Cracow University in support of the Council's prerogatives was accepted by a majority of votes; and in the assembly the Polish delegate Olesnicki exercised a dominant influence. But at the Congress held in 1515 at Vienna, the Jagellon dynasty appeared already in tutelage under the Habsburgs; and forty years later at the Council of Trent (1545–1563) Poland was to remain dumb, save only to dispute the precedence accorded to Portugal.

§ 2

That something had happened to bring about such a violent change is certain: what was it? Was it the fact that the organic development of

the country, which had hitherto been so rapid, was utterly arrested at this moment? The Cracow school points to the "improvised" Constitution of 1573 as supplying both the date and the cause of this phenomenon—the Constitution which included the famous "pacts" imposed on Henri III—a triumph of sheer licence for the noble-born *demos*. But, according to the same school of historians, the process of decay, as thus explained, was already advanced well before this event. It also seems, on the other hand, that at a much later period the Polish political organism gave unequivocal signs of evolution. Thus the first use of the *liberum veto* is generally allowed to date from 1652. At this date also is placed the commencement of a fresh phase in the history of the Petty Diets in the quickening of the great stream of decentralization which tended to engulf the whole interior life of the country. After a three years' interval the Constitution of 1573 had for its sequel an organic capital reform in the legal tribunals of the country. Evidently the year 1573 marks only the culminating-point of a period which, starting from the later years of the fifteenth century, stretched right away onwards to the earliest years of the eighteenth. Within that period—before the untimely arrival of a phase of actual inertia under a Saxon monarch—everything, on the contrary, was life and movement.

This vigorous activity may undeniably be regarded as perilous, as making directly for anarchy and indirectly for ruin. The *noblesse* having managed to concentrate the whole power of the State into its own hands, it could hardly be described as shorn of activity or as "mummified." So far from moving too little, it was moving only too much; ever bent on fresh usurpations, it attained an extreme individualism —an independence that brooked no limit and a liberty that knew no check.

Was this a retrograde movement? To what point in the past did it try to lead back the life of the country? Was it to the "patriarchal" age of the early Piasts?—as to which Bobrzynski, one of the leading writers of the Cracow school, writes, "The existence of the entire nation at that time centred in the court of the Sovereign, whose person was everything in the State." Was it to the "patrimonial" period of the reign of Lokietek and of Casimir the Great?—the moment when "blindly docile to the orders of the king, the *Starostes* * put down by armed force the least tendency towards insubordination, and the sword of the master did not hesitate to strike so powerful a personage as Borkowicz."

The Polish State, as it passed to the first of the Jagellons from his predecessors, stood out as an exception in the Europe of the early

* Life-tenants of royal domains.

fifteenth century, but precisely by virtue of a concentration of its power, of which the only other example is furnished by the Teutonic Order of knighthood. This was why, when they faced each other on July 15, 1410, on the plain of Grünwald, the two were able to effect a deployment of forces at that time without an equal in Europe. After this came the period of Casimir Jagellon (1445–1492), "the proud inheritor of a kingdom in which, in the absence of feudalism and of *apanagés* * princes, the Sovereign recognized no obstacle to his will, permitted no resistance to his commands," and determined to crush any agitation for a privileged particularism.†

Was the decentralizing movement of the sixteenth century in Poland retrograde in inverse ratio to the current running in the contrary direction which prevailed at this time in the other European countries? But did not even this latter show itself rather retrograde, by its return to a political ideal derived from the Renaissance, in line with the tradition of the Rome of the Cæsars? And, as applied to the forms of political or social life, can decentralization be deemed retrograde? To a Polish historian the gradual encroachments of the nobiliary

* *Apanager*, to settle an estate or province upon a sovereign's younger son for his maintenance.

† The principle of leaving political independence to each State in an empire.

demos in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seemed premature at first, though later tardy and retrogressive. The conservatives of that time, who were in a better position to judge, did not hesitate to denounce them as rash innovations.

To deny the potent vitality of which this movement is the outward expression is like refusing to recognize the brightness of the sun at noon. It has nothing in the least corresponding to a period of decadence. Any apparent contradiction is easily explained.

§ 3

Decentralizing was progressive in one sphere only—within the somewhat straitened limits of its own internal autonomy. In nearly every other direction it bred the mildew of stagnation, enfeebling and sterilizing the germs of that thriving culture which the immediate past had bequeathed as its legacy to the present. Cracow's *Alma Mater* ceased to offer hospitality to the multitude of students from the West who were attracted to its brightly burning hearth, kindled at the intellectual World's End of Europe. The gloom of this sinister influence, spreading itself in ever widening circles, hung like a pall over the land in which the name and fame of Copernicus had shone so brilliantly. Simultaneously, as though smitten in the very well-

spring of their life, began to wither the first-fruits of industry, of trade, of art, which in so many centres had begun to put forth their tender shoots and to offer fair promise for the future. Everything that told of growing prosperity, mental or physical—every sign of developing culture or of enhanced economic power—was swept away as it were in a moment.

This twofold aspect of the nation's past serves to explain why Polish thought was perplexed—why it was undecided between a hopefulness and a despair of which both alike could appeal to facts for support. It may well be that the Poland of the fifteenth century had in some ways forged ahead of her European rivals and—so to say—laid down the landmarks of future human progress. But to sustain this *rôle* it was essential that she should develop side by side all the factors which make up true pre-eminence. Emulating the example of England, Poland sought to rear the structure of her national polity high above the level of others, to secure that, firmly set on a wide and solid foundation, it should be built boldly and beautifully and crowned with an incomparable richness, material and moral.

To change the metaphor—Poland's task was to obtain a harvest from soil which, after being laboriously brought under cultivation, was allowed to become waste. Its restoration was undertaken and monopolized by a single privi-

leged class which, in its overweening pride, excluded the others from all share in making the constitution, and from all exercise of political power. This caste denied itself every aim outside those ideals in which it thought to find satisfaction, but which in the event proved to be absolutely unsatisfying both materially and morally.

The ideals kept their attractiveness, but they crushed those who attempted to carry them out. The body politic, suffering from malnutrition, was unequal to the work demanded of it; the soul of the community became enfeebled and lowered; and paralysis had as its sequel the form of social dissolution known as anarchy. Not but that even now the spirit of the nation was to the last still subject to good impulses, as the Constitution of May 3, 1791, shows. Even the pessimist Kalinka cannot deny it a certain creative originality, though unfortunately strength was lacking to give it effect. It was a praiseworthy idea to vote an army of 100,000 men to defend the country's menaced independence, only there was no strength left to call it into being, and a similar lack of means forced Kosciuszko to fight his great battle with only a few regiments.

§ 4

But what was the reason of this extravagant growth of the aristocratic element, and of the

lack of resources adequate to its ambitions? It is not to be found in the relative youthfulness of the Polish State; an even later entry into the field of European activity did not hinder Russia from setting up and maintaining a strong Government. Among the specific characteristics of the national life of ancient Poland which are commonly thought to have caused her downfall may be named the following: A restricted racial basis, coupled with a wide colonial expansion; a spirit of liberty impatient of the least restraint, and an expansion of individualism; a monarchical rule strictly limited, and an excessive development of the parliamentary principle; a decided inclination for self-government, and an almost morbid distrust of authority in every shape and form, personal or collective. Yet all these symptoms are to be found in England at the same epoch; to say nothing of the close parallel, in the eighteenth century, of a German dynasty which introduced into the national organism a similar influx of foreign elements.*

The solution of the enigma seems to lie in a combination of causes and effects, of which historians have taken due note while apparently missing their true import. The case is full of

* A study of English history at close quarters would probably convince the author that he has overstated his case. The English kings of the Hanoverian line were too wise to attempt "an influx of foreign elements into the national organism"; and in the second generation of this dynasty the sovereign's proudest boast was his British birthright.—*Tr.*

contradictions—the commonplace jostling the singular—a rapid and exuberant growth under the stimulating action of exceptional energy being followed by a sudden change of circumstance, which upset the equilibrium in the dynamic apparatus then brought into play; here imperfect nourishment, there excessive nutrition, and a general deterioration which gave grounds for evil forebodings; yet, side by side with this, a partial survival of a strong vitality calculated in some ways to justify great hopefulness.

Up to the second half of the fifteenth century Poland was more than an agricultural country. Judged by the standard of that day, it was distinguished by its commercial and industrial activity. Cracow still cherishes the memory of Wierzynek, the merchant prince, who in 1365 entertained King Casimir the Great with an ostentation never surpassed in that city, before or since, by any show of lordly hospitality.

Between 1096 and 1270 the Crusades set flowing from West to East a strong current of military activity. "Trade follows the flag," and this movement was succeeded by a development of industry and trade. Behind the pious onrush of Christian chivalry a regular network of trade arose, which out of the general mass of European society called into existence many new political centres.

From the homes of industry and commerce in

the West two routes led to the new markets acquired in the East: one, maritime, by the Adriatic; the other, by land, across Central Europe. Astride of the former, at the half-way halting-place, sat Venice, which very soon became a great power; placed athwart the latter, the Polish State sprang into prominence. A comparison of dates and a close observation of the assimilating process by which the incoherent patrimony of Boleslas (992–1025), with its chaotic mixture of races, emerged two centuries later (1288–1370) as the empire of Casimir the Great, lead to one conclusion—that the unifying power which welded together these elements of organic life, the energy which shaped their development into a single body, was provided by a combination, rare at that epoch, of favourable economic circumstances.

The Poland of Casimir the Great was introduced into the sphere of Western commercial and industrial life, and by consequence into the lap of its civilization, in which she was at once accorded a privileged position. Having need of Poland for the passage of caravans to and fro, Europe showered on her many benefits, bestowing on her gifts of riches and culture. Cracow and Leopol were transformed into emporiums, whither flowed as to a centre the treasures of two worlds. With these as her capitals, the new Polish dominion assumed an amplitude and a power

which were in keeping. Her development was in a sense artificial, because it depended materially on these outside supports; it participated in the rapid and luxuriant vegetation of the hothouse. A single century was made to suffice for the work of several—a single reign for the work of a whole dynasty. Having inherited an empire "of wood," Casimir the Great bequeathed one "in stone"—so ran the popular saying, which was true both in figure and in fact. And the Poland of his reign outvied the entire German world in the possession of a University.

The plant was forced; given time, it could have sent forth deep roots and spread vigorous branches from a healthy stem. But time was the one thing lacking. The catastrophe which three centuries later was to crush out Poland's existence was preceded by another which was a preparation for it: the Turks occupied Constantinople (1452), the Tatar hordes spread themselves along the coast of the Black Sea, and almost at the same moment the Cape of Good Hope was doubled and America discovered (1486–1498)—events which combined to divert to other channels the trade of the European world. Farewell then to Poland's prosperous relations with West and East! Her Pactolus, whose fertilizing floods had enriched her soil, now ceased to flow. Europe, turning its back on

this once-favoured land, left it to face alone the inroad of Turco-Tatar barbarism.

§ 5

The country of Casimir the Great and Wierzynek henceforth resembled a new-born infant who has been weaned too soon. The life and growth of the prematurely weaned nursling are not stopped, but its organs will develop themselves and function in an irregular manner, here strongly, there feebly. So with Poland. There was a failure, not merely of the sources of prosperity which had enriched its towns, but of the whole wealth of the old Empire of the Piasts. Intellectual culture shared the lot of economic possessions. In the sixteenth century Poland appeared as a country almost exclusively agricultural and therefore comparatively poor; and neither science nor art—those fair fruits and flowers of civilization—could thrive on a poor soil. This newer Poland seems also to have been established upon far too sumptuous a footing. It was with her as with Venice—situated on the other commercial artery, which was cut at the same time. Here, as there, the building was large out of all proportion to the requirements—its apparently fine architecture merely a piece of clever scene-painting with a sham portal. For three centuries the country as a whole lived beyond its means because its

component parts had individually contracted unthrifty habits. In order to "carry on," an heroic effort had to be made, with results truly surprising in themselves, yet too sporadic to remedy a chronic exhaustion. Momentary outbursts of energy could not stem a continuous progress of decline.

The geographical and political conditions under which alone her bare existence could be ensured imposed upon Poland the necessity of waging ceaseless and truceless warfare. Facing west, she had been the outpost of the Slavonic world on guard against the German thrust. Facing eastwards, she was to be the advanced sentinel of Christianity and civilization against Islam and barbarism. For self-protection on each frontier Poland had perpetually to keep armed vigil—a long-drawn effort which of itself sapped her strength.

The burden of effort was borne alone by the *noblesse*, the only class which did not suffer directly by the change in the national fortunes. To some extent, indeed, they were the gainers. Owning all the land, they continued to draw from it large resources, which they monopolized to their own profit.

The decay of their rivals, the *bourgeoisie*, in wealth and influence—to which the ruin of the towns bore tragic witness—enhanced the importance of the nobles. Their order was about

to experience a great development, to increase and multiply, not only by the growth of their families, but by fresh creations of nobility. Branching out in all directions, they would be arranged in gradations, some descending towards the bottom of the social scale so as at last to be almost confused, except for their privileges, with the country labourers. These would erect themselves into a sort of democracy, entitled to coats of arms and otherwise privileged, though plebeian in some of their employments; at the same time leaving outside and beneath them a decayed middle class and a peasantry—the great mass of the nation—kept in serfdom.

The mainstay of this nobiliary class was agriculture. The tilling of the soil was a busy and profitable employment which, steadily and ardently pursued, long yielded an adequate support to those engaged in it. The colonization of the immense Lithuanian domain was their work, just as the blood poured out on the eastern border was their blood. And yet, notwithstanding this generous outlay in toil and valour, the result left much to be desired, because its benefit was too partial and one-sided. Limiting their activities to the exploitation of the soil, these labourers of gentle blood neglected other fields of cultivation; their ambitions were confined within the narrow bounds of class interest. In the Ukrainian Steppes they thought

it sufficient to bring more and more land under productive cultivation. As might have been foreseen, the transformation of the Cossack horsemen into a peasantry liable to forced labour made enemies of them, and being carried out without the necessary precautions simply ruined the whole undertaking.

The spirit of caste betrayed itself in the form which the members of the governing class gave once for all to the life of the community—that is, in the widest sense of the term, the body and soul of the political and social organism. Making no account of anything or anybody, they looked upon this particular combination as existing for their own exclusive use and behoof, adapting it to suit themselves; and there is no doubt that by its suppleness, its plasticity, its mobility, it answered that purpose very well. In plan it was partially constructed on the mediæval model. Western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries could not furnish any other, and later the connexion was broken. The Poland of the sixteenth century was hardly affected at all by the movement of the Renaissance. She had already been left on one side; she was not capable of a "rebirth." She did not return to the cult of the Greek and Roman ideal, for she owed to this source only that which Christianity itself had borrowed from it, in the shape of another Renaissance—that is, of the idea of Liberty,

which it disengaged from the Pantheistic conception of the Omnipotence of the State. Western Europe took over this part of the Græco-Roman heritage; Poland received the other, combining it with the purely Christian idea of the emancipation of the individual, and on this foundation worked out that compound of Republicanism crowned by monarchy — of Democracy with an aristocratic basis—which she chose as her lot.

Certain secondary characteristics of its primitive organization and existence have helped to decide its orientation in this direction. Among these may be named the absence of a feudal element; the permanence of powerful traditions of community life, and the importance of religious influences. Much longer than elsewhere the Church preserved here her *rôle* of chief instrument of civilization; with education as the main source of knowledge and of moral ideas, she combined the notion of duty—of the responsibility of all human power before the tribunal of Eternal Law.

§ 6

While free from the novelties of political and social reconstruction now fashionable in the West, the style adopted for Poland was far from being a mere servile following of antiquated models; it bore the stamp of absolute originality and of fitness for its purpose. That it was instinct with the spirit of progress was apparent

from certain marked features which showed it to be in advance of contemporary European notions. The fact is easily explained by the exceptionally privileged position of those who planned and built up the edifice, and who, untrammelled both in making and in executing their designs, were free to concentrate their whole energies and their entire resources on the work in hand. It is true that, as a whole, the Polish organism was from the beginning of the sixteenth century overtaken by an ever-advancing impoverishment of its life-blood; but the nobiliary *demos* continued for a long time yet to exercise a plenitude—indeed an over-plenitude—of strength, as was clearly evidenced in the coming century both by the colonizing process carried out on either bank of the Dnieper and by the campaigns waged in Muscovy.

The maintenance of this partial plethora in a body generally debilitated was possible only by virtue of a political and social arrangement which laid the whole weight of the administrative machinery on one section of the nation. In the long run, however, those on whom the charge was laid had to give way under its weight. It has been said of Polish institutions that their regular and proper working could be carried on only by the ministry of angels. Something of the same verdict was pronounced, after an adequate experience, by the Swiss La Harpe,

with respect to all democracies. For the Polish democracy mere men might, all the same, have sufficed, if only there had been enough of them. But the base of the structure was too limited. Elsewhere class antagonisms were commonly the prime obstacle to an active realization of social equilibrium; here, equilibrium was excluded by the original plan of construction, which from the very beginning showed a disquieting resemblance to the Tower of Pisa.

Poland's state of isolation in the world of Europe was due, not to the external forms in which her institutions were clothed, but to the ideas and principles which underlay their working, and which were at variance with those current in the rest of Europe.

These differences became ever more pronounced and more sharply accentuated, and their nature and purport are a proper subject of investigation. If it turns out that what they stood for was no mere incompatibility of temperament, but a fatal inability to co-exist side by side—which for the Poland of the Past spelt a sentence of death—then it becomes indispensable for us to know whether and how we can shelter and safeguard from a like fate that Poland of the Future which we are hoping and working to bring back to life.

CHAPTER III

IDEAS AND PRINCIPLES

§ 1

Politically speaking, the Europe of the eighteenth century was a sort of Babel. Every State lived according to its own fancy and each for itself. Even those rudimentary signs of international fellowship, which in the shape of commercial, postal, or monetary conventions have come into existence during our own era, had not so much as been sketched out in those days; and if any such fancies did fascinate certain minds, they had mostly been relegated to imaginary countries like More's "Utopia" or the "Cité du Soleil" of Campanella.

This national individualism did not, however, exclude every tie of fellowship between nation and nation. As the uncivilized tribes of North America, according to Montesquieu, possessed their public right, so Europe anterior to the French Revolution did not wait for the unifying stream which issued from that cataclysm in order to possess itself of a body of ideas, traditions, manners and customs, produced either by identity of origin or by the fact of living in the

same corner of the globe. One knows the elements of this code, of which Albert Sorel has given a masterly exposition in the first volume of his *L'Europe et la Révolution française*. At its base is the notion of the State, with the three principles which twenty centuries of evolution had introduced and blended: the Roman idea of the collective being, wielder of sovereign and absolute power; the Christian teaching that authority issues forth from God and is delegated by Him to His anointed representatives on earth; and the feudal conception of the monarch, considered as natural suzerain.

It was, however, only the abstract idea of the State, in accordance with the Roman theory, and the Divine source of power, as the Church teaches, that were essential. The Church herself, in fact, admitted the claims of republican governments to be legitimate; the monarchical form happened to be the more usual, although wherever it prevailed it was interpreted according to the formula which Louis XIV borrowed from Bossuet: "The whole State is contained in the person of the Prince; in him is embodied the power, in him is expressed the will, of the whole people."

In the course of the century, it is true, the progress of scepticism shook the mystic foundation of the established order; but its place was immediately taken by the opportunist principle

of prescription. As Pascal had already said, "Usurpation was introduced formerly without reason; now it has become reasonable and must be regarded as authoritative and external." Voltaire observes with precision, "By time, occasion, usage, prescription, force, all rights are constituted." The rights of the State personified in the Sovereign—where there is one—are not less to be regarded as absolute.

Such was the teaching on the subject held in common by all, with one striking exception. Outside Poland herself, the constitutional paradox presented by her political *régime* would naturally seem a violent anomaly. A single member of the European family, dissociating itself from the beliefs of its neighbours, interpreted in quite a different fashion the relations between sovereign and people—between the individual and the State; and she remained constant to this conception of the subject up to the very end of her own existence as a State. In the sixteenth century she possessed a number of political writers, unknown abroad and now little known even in their own country, though in their own day accepted as authorities—Modrzewski, Orzechowski, Warszewicki. Between them and their eighteenth-century successors—Konarski, Staszic, and King Leszczynski, the unity of teaching on this point was complete, while it ranged them in prominent opposition to all their *confrères* of

other countries. The two groups did not speak the same language.

"It concerns kings to know," says Modrzewski, "that they are set up for the people, and not the people for them. The authority they wield over the nation is given them, not for themselves, but for it." Another, Orzechowski, addresses the depositary of this authority in these terms: "Know of a surety what it is that distinguishes a pagan sovereign from a Christian sovereign: among the pagans, kings are *summa summarum* over all; they own their subjects like horses or oxen, whom at their will they ride or harness to carts; in their eyes *finis rerum rex in regno, id justum quod regi utile*; amongst Christians, on the contrary, *summa summarum res publica est, rex servus rei publicae.*" *

Both these writers well knew what they were saying. Politically speaking, Europe never became quite Christian, and ever since the Renaissance it has relapsed more and more into Paganism. Of this these authors were not ignorant, and the antithesis which they drew between pagan kings and Christian kings existed as an actual reality between all the other monarchs of Europe—*finis rerum reges in regno*—and the King of Poland—*rex servus rei publicae*—not only when, like the last Jagellon, he was the

* This expresses quite definitely and precisely the whole spirit of the English Coronation Service.—*Tr.*

representative of an ancient inheritance of power and glory; but also, and with even more reason, when, like Poniatowski, he was no more than the last bearer of a discredited elective title. To satisfy his subjects the former had to do violence to his most cherished sentiments in the matter of choosing a consort; the latter had to make a daily sacrifice of his ease and convenience to the first-comer among his subjects, whose servant he was.

The antagonism of ideas and principles was here fundamental, and it naturally grew wider the more the political systems reared on these two opposed bases were developed on one side and the other. Thus separated, their diverging ways ended as far as the poles asunder: as regards the conception of the State—on one side to an extreme centralization in which the individual vanished; on the other, to a triumph, not less extreme, of centrifugal tendencies, in which individualism reached the summit of emancipation: as regards the application of the monarchical principle—on one side to the deification, on the other to the equally excessive humiliation, of this element. Yet the constitutional forms did not exist for nothing; they were almost identical in the two cases. The difference lay in the practice and in the entire working of the political system at home and abroad; in administration as in diplomacy, in

war as in peace, a yawning gulf was opened which finally separated ancient Poland from her neighbours, western or eastern. Venice, with its doges, its Council of Ten, and its aristocratic hegemony, bearing so marked a resemblance to the Polish State, and the other Italian republics, with their more or less mediæval institutions, were thoroughly at home in that Europe in which triumphed the genius of Frederick II; they governed themselves on the same principles; they acted in accordance with the same political habits. The supreme magistrate of Genoa might be amazed to find himself at Versailles: he was no more an intruder there than was Peter the Great at the Court of Louis XV, whatever surprise he may have created by his extraordinary appearance and bearing. No European Court in the eighteenth century, or even in the seventeenth, saw any King of Poland, and the Emperor Leopold did not choose personally to do the honours of his own Court even to the Liberator of Vienna. Sobieski at the Viennese Court would have seemed out of place. And the case of Poland herself was not dissimilar when, shortly afterwards, there was no place found for her in the European world. Not because she was Republican and democratic: England under Cromwell held the same position. Not because she had an elective sovereign: the King of the Romans was one also. In the constitutional

order, Europe, at an average, was neither more monarchical nor even, in places, less anarchical than the land of the *liberum veto*. King George III, on whom his Parliament forced the detested Administration of the elder Pitt, had not much more power, and soon had less, than Stanislas Poniatowski, who in theory preserved the most important attributes of sovereignty—namely, the power of appointment to offices and of collating to benefices. But, whether she were republicam or monarchical, Poland always carried within her something that was foreign in the eyes of Europe: she was clearly not of the family!

§ 2

The State, according to the theory which prevailed in Europe from the sixteenth century until nearly the middle of the eighteenth, is the personification on earth of the divine idea—Deity, the Absolute Being, which has in itself its beginning and its end; and sovereign rulers, as its representatives, share this sublime essence. Bossuet has not feared to commit the sacrilege of writing, "The title of Christ * is given to kings, and one sees them everywhere called Christs . . . the king's throne . . . is the throne even of God." On this principle the State knows no law above itself and owns for itself

* Bossuet is referring to the title given to a king as "the Lord's Anointed"—i.e. "Messiah" = "Christos."—*Tr.*

only one rule of conduct—namely, its own interest. This "reason of State" is indeed no more than an adaptation of the old Roman formula, *Salus populi suprema lex esto.* From Machiavelli to Frederick II its theoretical substratum alone varies. Bossuet's mysticism was transformed in the thought of the philosophic school of the eighteenth century into a tempered weapon of rationalism, sharpened to a point of irony. Frederick II added to it a note of brutal cynicism. The principle remains. "When justice is lacking in force, force is the only justice," wrote Pascal, in appearing to comment on a passage in Richelieu's will. "He who has force is often right in a matter of State; and he who is weak can with difficulty exempt himself from being in the wrong in the judgment of the greater part of the world." Frederick II and his contemporaries already cared very little for this tribunal. "In my opinion," wrote Joseph II, "we may leave people full freedom to talk as they like, so long as they leave us to do what we like." "Interest ought to outweigh every kind of resentment, however just it may be," added one of his sovereign's collaborators, Cobenzl, Austrian Ambassador to Russia; who no doubt meant also, "and to outweigh every sentiment of justice." Though pluming themselves on their aloofness from active politics and their preference for objective philosophy,

the political writers of the period show themselves steeped in the same spirit.

To their contemporaries, the statesmen and thinkers of Poland, the whole idea was absolutely alien. The Polish language contained no word for this dominating principle, which indeed was as unfamiliar to the Poles of that day as the notion of Parliamentary government would nowadays be to some tribe in Central Africa.

In the land of the *liberum veto* it was left to one solitary writer of the sixteenth century, Warszewicki, to betray some slight intellectual affinity, on this point, with the European world. It is only to be met with in an isolated aphorism, such as might have escaped accidentally from a pen habitually employed in the service of very different ideas and sentiments: "Fully conscious of his duties, a sovereign ought to persuade himself that it is for him to overcome difficulties, whatever their nature, by every possible means; seeing that nobody will ever inquire of him by what road he attained his object, nor think of passing judgment on him on this score." * Yet the portrait of a model diplomat, sketched elsewhere by the same writer, does not correspond in any way to the rule of conduct thus laid down. This envoy in a foreign land figures as a

* The quotation need not bear the interpretation put upon it. A sovereign who is "conscious of his duties" will exclude from "possible means" any that are unjust or unworthy. The advice to be heedless of a criticism which will not be offered is calculated to encourage him in right conduct.—*Tr.*

gospel missionary, an angelic annunciator of peace! He must be careful, in the reports he sends home, not to excite animosity between the Government whom he serves and that to which he is accredited, "for in no case must he regard himself as the enemy of those whose hospitality he enjoys"; he will be at pains not to promise more than he can perform, "because that would be disloyalty," and he will never try to mislead those with whom he has to negotiate, "because it is a villainous thing to deceive or to betray."

Such was the spirit of all contemporaneous literature in this country. Modrzewski branded as "unjust" all wars which had as their sole object either glory or an extension of territory. Orzechowski denied that self-interest is a legitimate objective for a State; he insists that it should set before itself the bringing of the human will into accord with the Divine Will. Again, at the end of the eighteenth century, the leaders of the reform movement from which sprung the Constitution of 1791, and especially those among their number who were most steeped in the European spirit—such as Kollatay or Staszic—were revolted by the sort of political aims they found current in the nations among whom they were living. "To oppress or to destroy anybody one can, as one can, by force or by cunning," appeared to them "contrary to the plan of creation." To introduce war into this plan,

under the sanction of natural law, after the fashion of the Moltkes and Bernhardis of to-day, seemed to them monstrous. "On this principle," observes Kollatay, "we ought to blame the creative activities of nature under which we destroy each other, and the stronger among us regard the weaker as beasts of burden to be made to work for them."

In the eighteenth century as in the sixteenth, those who wrote thus were the faithful interpreters of an opinion which held supremacy in their own country. In the course of so long a period the thought of the Polish people, or at least of that part of it which alone counted—namely, the *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie*, so far as the latter had a voice in the matter—never swerved from this position. And practice answered to theory. The divergence from Western standards became ever more strongly marked.

§ 3

From Casimir Jagellon to Augustus II and the two Czartoryskis, uncles of the last King of Poland, it was possible to discover on the throne and in the avenues to power some trace of inspirations and of aspirations which took their colour from Western or Eastern thought. To Sobieski himself it occurred to say that "*eventus non causae bellorum quaerentur*"—the important

thing to know about a war is not how it began, but how it ended. Nevertheless, no more in the career of this hero than in that of any one of his predecessors or successors, was anything, or hardly anything, transformed from idea into action. Bathory meditated vast projects of conquests; Ladislas IV had warlike inclinations; Augustus the Strong was associated with Peter the Great in enterprises of rapine. The execution always failed. The "reason of State," or the "interest of the State," conceived of after the Western manner, invariably found themselves up against invincible obstacles raised by the national disposition. In 1662 the "reason of State" willed to break down the opposition offered by the Marshal of the Crown, Lubomirski, to the plans of constitutional reform which King John Casimir, inspired by his wife, Maria Luisa de Gonzaga, strongly favoured. The opponent figured openly as a traitor and a rebel. He corrupted part of the Army, and at Leopol, where he rejoined the Court, put himself at the head of his military partisans and threatened it. The King, last of the Vasas, was a man who allowed himself to be defied with impunity. Not so the Queen; she had the traditional pluck of the royal houses of France and Italy, with which she was connected by birth and upbringing. Having gained to her side the Grand General of the Crown, she took steps to

put her plans into execution in the most effective manner. While some faithful soldiers closed the city gates, others surrounded the abode of the Grand Marshal, who was arrested with some of his accomplices, tried summarily, and executed. The Queen and her friends consulted eminent divines, who showed themselves as complaisant as those with whom Catharine de' Medici took counsel, and the blow was decided on. But straightway all the approaches to the royal residence were crowded with people, *noblesse* and *bourgeoisie*; the whole population of the town was stirred into movement with the concerted design of intervening in arbitration of this quarrel; appeals for conciliation, for mutual pardon, made themselves heard, and they were listened to.

The episode was typical; it illustrates in expressive fashion the characteristic traits of the national genius: a kindly temperament repugnant to violence in whatever form and however employed; a spirit of individualism, repudiating the sacrifice of the personal to the collective; and an exalted sentiment of what is due to the *ego*, as entitling the humblest subject to treat on equal terms with his sovereign. The "interest of the State" could not in this case be invested with the value of an absolute postulate, because there were opposed to it these multiple rival interests. The Sovereign could not claim the

attributes of divinity, as in the France of Louis XIV and Bossuet; if he had, he would have been obliged to take count of these other deities who set up altar against altar!

For the same reason it was out of the question in Poland that national affairs should be determined to suit the convenience of the Sovereign or of the State. Matters which concern people in general and those which affect the individual ought to be given like consideration, along with the various determining motives—whether of the moral or of the material order—on which they depend. In the seventeenth century, when Sobieski was contemplating, in concert with Sweden, a recovery of the territories usurped by Prussia, his designs clashed with the moral scruples of the Lithuanian nobility, who were unwilling to injure the House of Brandenburg. In the eighteenth century the Czartoryski projects of reform were held in check by the religious scruples of the Polish nobles, who did not wish to accede to the complaints of the dissidents.

The entire conduct of the affairs of the Republic in the sphere of external relations was invariably governed by interventions of this kind, without which any overruling *quos ego* could be raised in order to throw out a measure. Against opposing wishes of the same kind Louis XIII could claim that he represented divine authority, to which alone he was account-

able, as he told his Minister Richelieu: "Kings cannot be guilty of sin except in the sight of God, to whom alone belongs all cognizance of their deeds." Frederick himself had recourse to an appeal addressed to posterity. To Fleury he wrote: "Nothing that a thoughtless and ill-instructed world can say against me is of the slightest consequence to me. Posterity alone can be the judge of kings." A king of Poland, *rex servus rei publicae*, had to reckon with the opinion of each one of his subjects. There arose capital differences between this country and its neighbours as to the manner in which the one and the others conducted their affairs.

§ 4

From the practical point of view, the former administration of public affairs, whether internal or external, in Poland was a model of ingenuous frankness; from the moral point of view, in spite of the much-scorned disorder of its manners and of the humiliating compromises thus brought about, Poland presents the figure of a bewildered dove amid birds of prey. On one side, a greedy rush, a general rivalry in efforts to increase one's possessions, regardless of the means employed or of the injury inflicted on others; on the other side, incessant embarrassments of conscience—one day hindering the annexation of Muscovy, another day preparing the way for the tyrannical

oppression of minorities. Scruples during the Cossack wars in which the man who was for repression "by fire and sword," Wisniowiecki, had more trouble with his fellow-citizens than with his adversaries. Scruples in the final struggles for independence, in which every violent measure is combated by the invincible repugnance of public sentiment.

The absence of the absolutist element is not sufficient to account for this unvarying disposition. One other reason is to be found in a substratum, deeper than is found elsewhere and more intact, of the Christian element. "Disciple of Christ" describes this people not in name only, but in the depths—in the most profound depths—of its being, where the sowing of the Gospel seed has met with a soil of culture particularly favourable: Christian in the proper sense of the word, and rather Christian than Catholic; a son of the Divine Master much more than of any Church whatever. And that is why, in the domain of foreign policy, any relations which it may have with its neighbours are bound to be to its own detriment.

Their chief aim, pursued in emulation of each other, was self-aggrandizement, increase of territory, of power, of riches. It was the common opinion that the greatness and happiness of a State depended above all on the extent of its territory; hence it was acting within its

right to enlarge itself by whatever means. Machiavelli laid down this principle as based on experience: "Nothing is more natural or more common than a desire to extend and amplify one's boundaries; and those who have the ability and the enterprise to do this well deserve praise, or at least are not to be blamed."

In the seventeenth century Machon, though an apologist of Machiavelli, dissents from this principle: "Seeing that princes have nothing but what they have usurped, the strong will make laws for the weak, and help themselves to what suits them, on the ground that anything is right which is useful." In the eighteenth century Montesquieu condones this: "An unfortunate claim, but necessary, and therefore legitimate"—such is the summary of his teaching on the subject of conquest. Chiefs of the State could not be expected to show themselves more scrupulous, and Catharine sums up judicially the conclusions which follow from a doctrine thus sanctioned by high authority: "Not to gain is to be a loser," and no man can be expected to suffer loss willingly.

Some of the exponents of the principle of "grab" are ready to make modest reservations. Frederick, though one of the most eager to avail himself of the principle in question, nevertheless held that it must on no account be abused, either by demanding too much of fortune or by offend-

ing public opinion, if only because the gain to be realized would not compensate for the odium incurred. In 1771 this consideration restrained him from pressing some of his pretensions to Polish territory. In the same spirit Maria Theresa reckoned that "it is wise to know when to yield this or that," and to avoid "forfeiting one's reputation before God and man merely for the sake of a petty advantage." But this is only one element of the calculation in making out the profit and loss account for each operation. In applying it to the first partition of Poland, the mother of Marie Antoinette claimed, as an additional share of the spoil, some scores of square leagues to compensate her for the tears of shame she had shed on the occasion.

With greater sincerity, those who were engaged in trying to grab other people's property were nervously anxious as to any rival pretensions put forward, as to any jealousies provoked, and as to their common interest in checking the excessive aggrandizement of any single Power among them. Hence arose also the principle of another rule with which the public right of Europe was further enriched, and which was destined to become one of its fundamental ideas. The Balance of Power was later recognized as the governing factor in all combinations of international politics—alliances, wars, treaties of peace. But it was the weak States who generally would have to "pay

the piper." To establish, or re-establish, between two Powers of the same rank, the desired balance of power, rather than take anything away from the one who seems to have too much, it would be judged more expedient to transfer slices of territory filched from some third party with limited means of self-defence. This was the method on which Poland was partitioned. It was to happen nevertheless that, notwithstanding one act of rapine after another, the equilibrium was interrupted all the same for the benefit of one of the brigands, who was a better hand than the others at satisfying his appetites. To tell of that is to relate the history of Prussia.

In theory, the right of conquest admits of various restrictions. Montesquieu imposed on it one such in limiting the "power of assimilation"; the spirit of conquest ought, in his view, to be "conservative, not destructive." A century earlier, Bossuet had already conditioned the exercise of this right by another principle. He declared that the world, given back to the barbarism of primitive ages, was feeling for the foundation on which to rebuild civilization—the consent of the peoples to the lot which is imposed on them by their conquerors. At a still earlier time, expressed in a more picturesque manner, the same thought is found in Rabelais' *Pantagruel*.

Although in the domain of civilization this

had always been recognized as a binding rule in theory, yet the European practice by no means corresponded to it, either in the fifteenth or the seventeenth century. To take and to keep everything you could lay hands on, no matter by what methods—Europe knew no other rule. Such was the case everywhere, except in Poland.

In that country theory and practice always went hand in hand in carrying out a purpose to which the Republic remained constant up to its last hour. Staszic, a statesman of the end of the eighteenth century, puts into the mouth of John Zamoyski, a distinguished Pole of the sixteenth century, words which assuredly express his exact sentiments: "Every conspiracy of some to despoil others causes prejudice to all peoples, and therefore could not be advantageous to Poland. Those who invade the territory of another are disturbers of the world and enemies of the human race. . . . Let us form an army for the security of our frontiers, but not for making conquests."

In the entire history of Poland the only departure from this rule of conduct was in Bathory's campaigns, and still more in his projects, and they were those of a foreigner. Moreover they met with a lively resistance from national opinion. Left to itself, it promptly returned to its natural inclinations, which were repugnant to all territorial extension

carried out otherwise than by way of peaceful incorporation. This peculiar characteristic served to trace a hard and fast line of demarcation between this country and other European nations. Throughout the whole extent of Europe one could not safely name a single one of the territories forming part of the greater States as having been acquired without violence. Amongst the provinces formerly Polish not one was conquered by arms, unless it were the Russia of Halicz; and even this conquest was achieved, not over Russians, for none figured in 1341 at the battle of Lublin which made King Casimir master of the country, but over Lithuanians, Tatars, and Hungarians, who were fighting among themselves over it as a prey.

§ 5

Opinions may differ as to the value of this unselfish policy when compared with its opposite. Possibly, under the actual conditions, it may have inflicted mortal injury on Poland. In point of fact it disarmed her, inasmuch as it deprived her military organization of the stimulus derived from a conscious development of fighting power —in other countries from the mad lust of what is to be gained, or from the grim necessity of holding by violence advantages that have been gained already. The acquisitions effected by Poland remained attached to her voluntarily,

and the Poles were given to assuming that no effort was needed to keep them. They came at last even to persuade themselves that, as they attacked nobody, they were running no risk of becoming objects of aggression themselves. Their final illusion was to believe that everybody would be anxious to defend in them the most inoffensive and accommodating of neighbours.

To count less and less on their own forces, and to repose with frank confidence on those of others, became with them habitual. When they did not accord credit to the honour and loyalty of these supposed protectors of their safety, they based their hopes on the motives of self-interest which they imagined would induce their neighbours to take care of them. Unwilling to abandon these preconceived notions, they attributed a practical value to theories that were purely speculative, and, in particular, pictured to themselves the Balance of Power as an intangible foundation of an order of things in which they judged that the integrity of their possessions was thus sufficiently guaranteed.

Miserably sinister illusions, evidently; yet so many things conspired to impose them on this people: its racial character and tendencies; the way in which it made its entry into the European system, by which it was transported direct, and without any transitional stage, from a state of patriarchal existence and a setting of

pagan mythology into the sphere of Christian civilization; and then lastly its destiny, which ordained that the most memorable triumphs of its history, achieved without spilling of blood, should be due solely to the magnetism of its spiritual being and of its temperament: all tended to inspire it with idealism in public, as in private, life. It proceeded passionately to idealize the world around it as even such as she was herself.

It regarded its past, its present, its future as a divinely written poem, and imagined itself to be under the special protection of Providence. Some indeed of its sons, more far-seeing than the rest, had the sense to perceive the perils to which these false fancies were beguiling their countrymen; but the blind faith of the masses was unaffected. The distinguished religious orator of the sixteenth century, the Jesuit Skarga, denounced the errors and failings of the Polish people, and announced the sure chastisements they must inevitably entail. At the same time, like the poet Krasinski several centuries later, he declared that "the greatest of all guarantees of a nation's security and prosperity is to be found in its virtue." But neither he nor any of the nation's counsellors before or after him dared to tell the Poles that they were rushing on their doom because they were becoming day by day poorer and weaker than the

neighbouring nations, and that such was their lot because—as Catharine persuaded herself from her own point of view—"He who does not add to his possessions loses."

This is why the prophetic voices which carried warnings to the nation failed to produce conviction. Had they, however, been able, as the poet Slowacki wrote, "to convert bread-eaters into angels," the lot of this people would not have been modified in any sensible degree. From all we have been able to learn, the story of angelic intercourse with men has always, since the world began, been written in tears and blood.

It may be that even Richelieu rendered homage to virtue when he admitted that "fidelity to their pledged word is the greatest force wielded by sovereigns"; but doubtless with the mental reserve, explicitly formulated by Frederick II, that "it is wrong to violate unnecessarily promises one has made."

In the eighteenth century Polish ears, which to all the words of Skarga had remained deaf, were opened by the more brutal eloquence of facts. But now it was too late. Nine centuries of idealist theorizing intruded into and governing living practice had too long rendered this people insensible to realities. More than with strong liquor—after their Saxon masters had led them to contract the habit of immoderate drinking—Poland was intoxicated with her dreams of a

millennium. When she came to her senses, at least when consciousness returned to the *élite* of her citizens, her Hannibal was already at the gates.

Then at last there was a complete awakening of reason, a thorough arousing of energy; but this could not conjure the catastrophe; it came too late and indeed affected no more than a select few. The masses continued to dream, while they closed their eyes so as not to see the overthrow of their temple walls. Deceived by the ideals to which they had done sacrifice so long, the unhappy people strove to keep up their self-deception to the last, even to the threshold of the tomb, and beyond. They idealized their own death and their posthumous existence. They have not lacked splendid poets to drape the dead body with purple—to persuade them that not only are they alive, but that they are great, that they are powerful, that they are giving law to the world!

Whether as thought or as action, these affectations assuredly form matter for criticism, if not for ridicule. Their partial foolishness may be admitted, just as it may be conceded that transcendent idealism has not always been free from alloy. Habits of supineness, love of ease, dislike of making the least effort, or other inspiring motives still more unworthy, were mingled together. But such is the way with all things human, and the Poles have no reason whatever to blush for the ideas and principles

to which they have adhered during the course of their historic career, and on behalf of which they have faced martyrdom. In applying to themselves the language of an illustrious Chief of the State, which has lately been applauded on both sides of the Atlantic, are they not justified in presuming that their "paradox" is by way of taking a brilliant reprisal for all the disdain of which it has been the object, and for the catastrophe of which it was supposed to have been the cause? Have they no ground for the forecast that very soon it will be inscribed at the base of a new structure of international right to be established by the consent—or maybe by the command—of the whole civilized world?

If so complete a revolution of the wheel of fortune should seem unlikely, let us remember that history —from the triumph of Christianity onwards—has recorded many cases of equal or greater singularity.

The spirit which animated the body of the old Polish State still lives, and has preserved the possibility of a future revival and restoration—a revival which shall infuse into the organs of the body the strength to perform their proper functions. At the present moment there is an ever-increasing probability of that happy turn of events. Has not the time come at last for an authoritative inquiry into the whole situation, with a view to reversing the cruel verdict passed long ago without the chance of appeal?

CHAPTER IV

ORGANS OF GOVERNMENT

§ 1

THE State, being collective, is commonly thought of as resembling in its structure the individual. The same essential elements—personality, will, and action—which determine for it the phenomenon of life, are represented respectively by the supreme authority, the legislative authority, and the executive power.

At the top of this organized hierarchy was the personal monarchy, and if in ancient Poland some exception were taken to it from the constitutional point of view, the reason was not that the attributes of the Crown were insufficient to enable the King to play his *rôle*. One would rather be disposed to think his power too great rather than too small. Nothing was done and nothing could be done in the State without his —at least nominal—participation, and everything was done—nominally, at least—under his authority. The laws voted by the Diets might, to the King personally, be altogether displeasing and prejudicial, but they were decreed and promulgated in his name. Even when bearing

arms against him, the Confederations invariably placed themselves near his person. His presence in the midst and at the head of the national representatives was so indispensable that, if he quitted the parliament chamber—were it only for some minutes—in the course of a sitting of the Assembly, not only did he suspend the legislative function, he destroyed it even to the point of nullifying all the acts already completed. After he had absented himself from the Chamber, a deputy could return and set the wheel again in movement; but the king—no! With him the soul had absolutely quitted the body of the Assembly, which had *ipso facto* been smitten dead.

To the Polish authorities on constitutional law it never occurred that their sovereign was one of the three estates of the Republic, after the English formula, "three estates of the Realm." * The dignity and the position occupied by the King of Poland seemed to writers such as Lengnich to forbid such a classification *cum tamen emineat.*

This pre-eminence was shown in many ways. In the Sovereign resided, in the first place, the effective source of legislative power. And this not only because neither Diet nor Petty Diet could meet unless convoked by him, the periods

* The author has been misled by an error very common even among Englishmen. In England the Crown is not an Estate of the Realm: the three Estates are the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal, and the Commons.—*Tr.*

of their respective sessions being fixed by law, but also because the High Chamber, or Senate, was an emanation of his power. It practically belonged also to the Sovereign to nominate the high civil and ecclesiastical dignitaries of which it was composed. The executive power was no less concentrated in his hands. He selected at his own will and pleasure the officials and heads of departments of every grade, from the highest to the lowest.

From the constitutional point of view the King of Poland was invested with a plenitude and force of authority hardly equalled in Europe, and comparable in the eighteenth century only with the despotisms of Russia and Turkey. In England, as everybody knows, the Upper House of the legislature is composed of hereditary lords, and the right of appointing functionaries is not exclusively wielded by the executive, but is even exercised by municipalities. In France, under the Monarchy, the sale of offices dispossessed the royal power of its prerogative in this connexion.

The official posts conferred by the Polish king were, in point of fact, tenable for life; but the independence thus assured to the recipients carried with it a corrective: there is extant documentary evidence that at the moment of taking possession of their offices the holders entered into an undertaking not to retain them

except at the pleasure of the Sovereign. Moreover, the constitutional law itself placed at the king's disposition effective means of coercing functionaries forgetful or negligent of their duties. Even the feeble John Casimir had recourse to this right. In the course of his reign (1648–1667) two of the highest dignitaries, the Vice-Chancellor Radziejowski and Lubomirski, after having for a long time braved their Sovereign's displeasure, were condemned to death, though protected by the people of Leopol.

Such was the royal prerogative in theory. In practice the King's constitutional position wore quite another aspect. The truth of the matter was expressed with tragic eloquence in a document, probably unique of its kind, a sort of political last will and testament, in which King John Casimir, announcing his abdication of the throne, explained frankly to his subjects the motives of his decision:

"I believe that in so acting I forfeit nothing except the *titulum vanum et nomen inane* which were all you left to your sovereign when you transferred *in populum* the whole of his prerogatives. For, after that, what still remained to him? Just nothing at all, except an unmeaning sceptre in his hand and a crown of gold—or of iron—on his brow: *inania signa*, for *monstrant non faciunt diademata regia regem.*"

Monstrant non faciunt: in these three words —declaring that the ensigns of royalty do not constitute, but only indicate, the bearer's kingship —the last of the Vasa dynasty on the throne of Poland summarized the destiny which had overtaken kingship in the country where he had been king for nearly twenty years. Radziejowski had been condemned to capital punishment. He nevertheless died quietly in his bed, and—traitor as he was to country and king, as well as a notorious scoundrel—he was enabled for a long period of years to brave justice and insult his sovereign. Why was this? It was simply because the spirit, the temperament, the genius of the nobiliary *demos* willed that this *coquin* should be a popular favourite; and because, accused of every crime and infamy, he stood up against the royal power as the accredited representative of his fellow-citizens' independence and prerogatives.

To the Poles the spirit of loyalty was absolutely alien. In England King George III was liable, while holding this title, to periodical crises of lunacy. He might, as Lecky, an historian of authority, has affirmed, have "done his country more injury than any of the sovereigns who went before him or came after him"; but his illness threw everybody into mourning. His recovery caused a universal transport of joy, with fireworks and illuminations everywhere, the humblest

dwellings having at least one candle. In Poland, utterly disgusted with the treatment he received after a life of self-sacrifice and brilliant service to his country, Sobieski died with the words on his lips, "There is none that doeth good, no not one" (Psalm xiv).

The explanation of this contrast is easy, though it would be unjust to stigmatize the character of this people, who thus repaid their most meritorious leader with ingratitude, without taking into account the great difference between its circumstances and those of England. In England, in the strife between the classes, all had an equal interest in recognizing the position of the king and in treating him with the respectful deference due to the indispensable arbiter.* In Poland the struggle since the sixteenth century was between only one class and the sovereign, who, as a consequence, was regarded as the enemy.

* Our author's estimate of the situation in England is, perhaps, ingenious rather than convincing. The "strife of classes," as described here, belongs to a much later phase of our history. The "struggle" in King George's reign was between parties, and he with his white-hot partisanship was about the last person in his whole realm to be desirable or possible as an "arbiter." The truth is that his popularity was personal; whatever his faults of temper and of judgement, his people knew him for an upright, God-fearing man of good intention and of kindly and homely disposition. He set an example of the domestic virtues, and "Farmer George" belonged to a type that Englishmen liked—all the more because he was the first British-born king we had had for generations. It was personal affection that sent his people into mourning when he was ill; nobody would have shed tears over a sick arbiter!—*Tr.*

§ 2

In the latter half of the eighteenth century the contest was already decided. The king was, in fact, definitely dispossessed of the prerogatives of his office. What became of them? Transferred *in populum*, said John Casimir—the people, that is, in the Roman sense—the privileged; and what royalty had lost was now presumably acquired by them, or rather by their representative organs, Diets and Petty Diets, conformably with the ordinary course. Everywhere and always the legislative authority tends to encroach on the other depositaries of power, the latter not being found capable of keeping it in check and restraining it within the limits of its proper functions. In Poland, however, this was not altogether the case. The inclination to usurpation encountered an obstacle in the functional impotence which since the seventeenth century had equally paralysed all the organs of public life. According to law, the Diet could only meet every two years, for a period of six months. Even for the making of laws this gives a narrow margin, and obstruction has a good chance of getting the best of it. To conduct the business of administrative government is, within these limits, an absolute impossibility.

The Polish legislators, however, gave evidence of having a very sharp appetite for this function

of Government; and it was easy to satisfy them —more or less legally—by making their sessions longer and the intervals shorter. They were summoned more frequently than the law prescribed. Between 1652 and 1764 the Diet was convoked no fewer than fifty-six times, although only five of all these sessions ever came to anything. From 1788 to 1792 the Diet must have sat almost continuously.

In law, the Diet in session was, with the king present, all-powerful. In fact, the Diet also possessed all power, even if the king were absent. But in that case it could not govern, because its existence had terminated. Its inability to govern was due, therefore, to this automatic extinction of its vitality, not—as often represented—to the exercise of the *liberum veto*, the effect of which in paralysing action was comparatively insignificant.

The obstructive possibilities of the *liberum veto* were a symptom, rather than a cause, of the paralysis of government. In practice it was less harmful than in theory. It was based on the principle accepted by all Slav communities, of unanimity in legislation. Originally it was meant as a safeguard against over-domination of minorities; indeed, its existence was inconsistent with majority rule; but any attempt to use it for forcing acceptance of one man's will, or the will of a small minority, was contrary

to the spirit and practice of the oldest Lechite or Russian assemblies, which were ready, if necessary, to put it down either by remonstrance or by force, as the oldest chronicles testify.

That the principle of the *liberum veto* was thus violated or its action evaded, there can be no doubt. But such is the common lot of principles. Take the case of an English law, which remained in full force up to the end of the eighteenth century, under which no accused person could be convicted unless he had personally taken part in the proceedings by pleading either "guilty" or "not guilty." In strict law his refusal to plead excluded all possibility of justice taking its course. But in practice this was obviated by laying the accused flat on his back and piling upon his body a number of heavy weights, which were increased * until the sufferer submitted.

Similarly, in the whole history of Polish Diets, there is not to be found a single instance in which the *liberum veto* triumphed, whether it were wielded by one deputy alone or by a large minority, against a majority that showed a bold front and knew its own mind. When, as in 1703 or in 1726, there was an attempt to employ this weapon in the shape of a joint protest by all the deputies from Greater Poland, representing several palatinates, it proved powerless—the

* The law prescribed that the weight laid upon him should be "as much as he could bear, *and more*."—*Tr.*

protesters being simply ejected from the assembly. But up to 1784, when a reform was initiated by the Czartoryski, such cases were rare. From then onwards to the disappearance of Poland as a State there was no example of the Diet's action being interrupted by the effect of the *liberum veto.*

Nevertheless, the principle of unanimity was not repudiated; it was expressly declared intangible. But it had become powerless, *telum imbelle sine ictu,* because reforms had made possible the organization of determined majorities. In any case the *liberum veto* was not responsible for the breakdown of the legislative machinery in ancient Poland, being itself the direct result and most salient symptom of that failure. The true cause is to be sought elsewhere.

§ 3

Some historians—as Pawinski—have traced this failure of the apparatus of government to the mania for decentralization which here, as in the old Germanic Confederation, transferred power from the centre to the local organs of self-rule. The analogy is inexact. In Germany the Diet of Ratisbon after 1663 was reduced by successive usurpations of Confederated States to the *rôle* of a mere registering body. But in Poland the Palatinates and their Petty Diets never stripped the central Diet of any of its

essential powers. The latter retained quite sufficient authority to prevent itself from becoming, like the German Diet, a fifth wheel to the coach. It remained the great motive power—necessary, indispensable to the mechanism of the State. Only, the wheel left off turning!

On the other hand, just as the king's losses brought no corresponding gain in real force to the representative organ of the nation, so when the balance came to be struck, the enfeeblement of the central Diet was found in no way to have profited the provincial Petty Diets—for an identical reason in the two cases.

The central Diet had not the wit to profit by its victory over royalty. It ought to have brought the executive authorities into dependence upon itself. That step was thought of, but the idea got no further than the intention: it never matured. The Government officials of all ranks managed to enjoy the same independence under the Diet and its representatives as they had formerly under the king and his nominees. Indeed it began to look as though they were going to gather up under the control of a strongly constituted bureaucracy the authority which had been let slip by the other organs of government. Here, however, the nobiliary *demos* put its foot down firmly. It was one thing for it to back up, as against the king, a Radziejowski or a Lubomirski; it was another thing altogether

for it to furnish them with weapons against itself.

The decentralization movement, of which the Petty Diets had become the focus, took on the character of a veritable campaign against all forms of power associated with the central authority of the State, and of opposing to it a system of authorities—social, communal, and so on, *ad infinitum*. This phase also of the decentralizing movement ran its course without any result of value. As early as the latter half of the seventeenth century it was visibly weakening, and soon gave way before a stream of tendency in the opposite direction.

In 1671 the palatinates of Cujavie drew up a project of reform, which amounted, as in King John Casimir's case, to an abdication. They meant to renounce the right of voting the local taxes in the Petty Diets, and to abandon this duty to the Diet. These acts of renunciation were multiplied. The potential had been lowered to the point of exhaustion.

The government of everybody by everybody, on the pattern proposed by the nobiliary *demos*, was perhaps a highly pleasing prospect—at least for those who were to do the governing; but in the long run the trouble and fatigue of it became almost insupportable. For to discharge the responsibility thus assumed, the whole of the nobility in one Palatinate, numbering at that

time some thousands of persons, accompanied by their numerous households, were obliged, six or seven times a year, to meet in some minor country town where lodging was wholly insufficient and board practically unobtainable.

At last the moment was bound to come when this proof of disinterested patriotism was demanded from the patient citizen once too often. The worm would turn. For no sooner had the country gentleman, worried and sick at heart, arrived home on his return from one session of his local Diet, than another one recalled him to the same place, owing to some unforeseen event —the dissolution of a Diet which necessitated new elections, a war claiming the Petty Diet's participation in recruiting operations, or local difficulties of administration.

As early as the latter half of the seventeenth century the nobiliary *demos* had had enough of it. There was a general *sauve qui peut*, and after the example set by the central Diet, the Petty Diets, from sheer weariness, disgust, or forgetfulness of duty, ceased to discharge their functions. Like the Crown before them, letting go the reality of power, they kept nothing but the *titulum vanum et nomen inane*; and in this way the Government of the country became for some time a sort of "thing of naught"; of which in theory everybody had charge, but about which, in practice, nobody—or almost nobody—cared at all.

Yet this great piece of State mechanism was set up in a style that was dignified and, for its period, even sumptuous. It is commonly held by students of economic science that the surest token of the strength of a State lies in its financial condition, as the most accurate measure of its activity. Judged by this standard, the ancient Government of Poland was well able to stand the test, and to justify the claims made on its behalf.

§ 4

In the eighth volume of the *Volumina Legum*, a collection of old Polish laws, are given in full the several points of the financial legislation enacted by the Federal Diet of 1776 and made obligatory for the Treasury Commission instituted at that period. Maintained in full force till 1788, this "Law of Finance" dealt with expenditure under two heads—one fixed, "consolidated" as it is termed in English, the other variable according to circumstances and subject to the decisions of a Permanent Council. This body, appointed by Parliament, made considerable progress, from 1764 onwards, in the work of reforming the institutions of the country. The credits appropriated to the upkeep of the Court and the Chancery, to the service of the Treasury and also to the redemption of the Public Debt, were between 1776 and 1784

authorized for payment in accordance with this budget.

The date of this law is specially noticeable. It will surprise people who have been familiarized with the legend of Polish "barbarism." It is generally agreed that the embryo of a French budget was to be found in the celebrated *compte rendu au Roi* drawn up by Necker in 1781. In all other countries of Europe—England excepted—this method of financial administration only made its appearance in the nineteenth century.

In Poland the publicity of Treasury operations and the control over the public finance exercised by Parliament date back to the sixteenth century. The dividing of the budget into two parts and the control of the "mobile" half by the national representatives are features in regard to which Poland is incontestably entitled to claim priority together with England. The unrepenting and unrelenting pessimism of certain historians of this country has, it is true, discovered an offset to this meritorious item in Poland's assets. They point to a characteristic feature in the financial *régime* of the Republic which they represent as peculiarly unjust—the non-participation of the nobility in bearing the common burdens.

This is one more instance of the way in which prejudiced critics, acting as *advocati diaboli*, strive to disparage their past history.

The freedom of the nobles from taxation was at any rate not confined to Poland. The same abuse was prevalent elsewhere. In France the *noblesse* were not dispossessed of their privilege of exemption from taxes till 1697, and then only to a limited extent. Even after this—all too partial—reform had been imposed at a time of extreme financial stress, the chief weight of taxation of every kind continued to rest on the non-privileged class.

In England, notwithstanding fiscal legislation based on very different principles, the extremely low rate of the impost on land and the severity of the game-laws created a marked inequality in favour of the aristocracy. In Poland the annual assessments supposed to grant exemption to this class or that always turned out to be illusory. In practice the rule was to make those pay who had the money. In one way or another the money was taken from wherever it could be found. The Polish nobility did not escape the action of this natural law.

Still the freedom from taxation which the *noblesse* secured for themselves made a big hole in the resources of the Treasury. The Polish budget of 1776 showed a balance of receipts over expenditure of 17,000,000 florins, or rather more than £320,000. A quarter of a century earlier the State revenues of Poland had not exceeded one-half of this sum, or 1–75th of the French

revenue, or 1–12th of what Frederick II managed to extract from the patch of sandy territory which then constituted the Prussian domain.

Yet to draw too rigorous a comparison would give rise to error. The Polish budget of 1776 did not include any provision for the expenses of administration in its widest sense—not a centime for law, police, or public instruction. Not that Poland dispensed with legal tribunals; it possessed at least a rudimentary service of public safety, and by the side of its flourishing University of Cracow several schools had been opened. In France, in Austria, and even in England, establishments of this character received a certain amount of State financial help. In Poland also a good deal of money was expended on these objects, especially under the head of "justice"; but the necessary funds were found by a different method. A very wide system of provincial fiscal autonomy made these services free, at least in principle. The judiciary *personnel* was paid for out of a special fund, derived from fees chargeable to the parties engaged in litigation. The schools possessed an independent endowment. The country police force was provided at the expense of the landowners, and the town constabulary was maintained from Crown land revenues.

From the cost of the other departments the central administration relieved the Petty Diets,

since it enjoyed—in principle at any rate—the help, as its executive agents, of a very numerous staff of unpaid officials—gentlemen who gratuitously undertook the charge of these public services. It is instructive to note, by way of comparison, that under conditions analogous, if not identical, the budget which the head of the Holy Roman Empire, as chief of the Germanic Confederation, had at his disposal did not exceed 13,884 florins (£28,000).

The "paradox" of Poland made its appearance again here. The financial autonomy of the different provinces—like their wide administrative autonomy—was in no sense a peculiar characteristic of this country. Yet even in England it did not reach so full a development, nor—at least in theory—was it applied so systematically. But was the system vicious in itself? Taine has observed that the manifold disorders and abuses under which the *ancien régime* succumbed in France could be attributed, with some show of reason, to the ruin of old feudal institutions whose character was precisely that of a centrifugal autonomy. The administrative decentralization of ancient Poland could not in any way be held responsible for the ill working of its system of government. It had not, in fact, been at work long enough for its experience to be regarded as decisive.

The plan of it was conceived in a large and

liberal spirit, but in its working a certain weakness began to appear, due to the delay in giving the organization of the new system its appropriate form and development. Doubtless it was possible to speed up the perfecting process if the nobiliary *demos* would have agreed. But the nobiliary *demos* would not agree; they had expressly barred themselves from agreeing often with anything; they wanted to do everything themselves, and then found there was no time to do it.

The disorderly meetings of the Petty Diets gave evidence of their utter unfitness to be entrusted with the management of provincial finance or with the important task of constructing the roads. As in all similar assemblies the members showed a tendency to dabble in politics. It is true that, towards the end, in 1789, they bestirred themselves to devise more effective administrative methods. Unfortunately, their most promising bantling, a permanent "Commission of Civil and Military Order," forfeited one essential element of success by appearing upon the scene too late!

At the centre, as in the provinces, the assets of the State budget were always insufficient to meet the liabilities, because the proportions of the body politic exceeded its capacities of alimentation. The Standing Army of the Republic reduced to 24,000 men, with an effective

in the ratio of 1 to 24 as compared with France, and of 1 to 3 as compared with little Denmark, absorbed not less than one-half of the total revenue that appeared in the central budget; but here again certain reservations must be made.

§ 5

France in the eighteenth century maintained an army twenty-four times as large as that of Poland: but maintained it how? With the resources of its Treasury? It is certain they would not have sufficed. They were vastly greater than those of the Polish Treasury, but they had to meet items of liability unknown to Poland, e.g. 17,000,000 in 1784 in the Necker budget for the royal family; 40,000,000 in the period from 1754 to 1764 for Madame de Pompadour. The French military charges at this period were covered from other resources. Louis XIV left a debt of 2,600,000,000 livres. Partly liquidated during the reigns of his successors by the summary expedient of a bankruptcy, it again claimed fifty years later an annual provision of 63,865,722 livres for payment of arrears due on the balance.

It was the same in other countries. Catharine II issued paper money for 137,700,000 roubles, and borrowed 116,196,556. In the whole of Europe this financial system—outside Poland—

prevailed, with only one exception: with a revenue of 17,000,000 thalers drawn from one of the poorest countries of the Continent, Frederick II maintained 160,000 soldiers and left 60,000,000 thalers of savings. But the soldiers were workmen employed in an industry which, in the hands of the Hohenzollerns, has been proved to be—until yesterday—one of the most productive of any. Seeing how greatly the business of war-making had enriched and profited Prussia, other countries took to it also, in the hope of making good the chronic deficits entailed by their indulgence in bloated armaments. For reasons already put in evidence, Poland could in no way participate in these habits: she was not one of the family.

This result was certainly striking, but the political mechanism which secured to Prussia a grasp of power out of all proportion to its natural resources had two grave defects. In the first place it pressed with extreme hardship on those who had to sustain it. Thus, in the outskirts of Berlin, for a huba of land that brought him in $9\frac{3}{4}$ thalers, the peasant occupier had to pay the Treasury a tax of 8 thalers 3 groschen. Next, this mechanism required a sufficiently skilled mechanician to work it. A few years after the death of the great magician, the savings he had bequeathed to his successor were replaced by a debt of 24,000,000 thalers.

A German historian, Hüppe, has endeavoured to show that the Poles resembled the Prussians in the militarism which was always so characteristic of the latter. He says the Polish nation was "a militarily organized democracy," and attributes to it "bellicose instincts." His opinion, however, will not bear examination by the light of facts.

Doubtless the Polish gentleman with the fierce moustache and clanking sabre loved to assume a martial air. Though poor—perhaps reduced to driving his own plough on the acre or two of land which kept him in bread—he would not part with his weapon of war even while occupied with this task of peace. Not, however, that he was ready to draw his sword for any bigger occasion than a tipsy quarrel. At Raclawice on April 4, 1794—the sole instance of a victorious resistance being offered to the enemy—at the critical moment in the supreme fight for the independence of the country, Kosciuszko found none to follow him in the attack on the Russian artillery save some peasants, barefoot and scythe in hand. In the rear, well armed and mounted, the flower of the nobility at once put spurs to their horses—but only to escape beyond range of the enemy's guns and go back to some less perilous business than that of war. After a period of moral feebleness there was a slight recovery, a few of the better disposed

entertaining ideas of reform and amendment; but they still showed little inclination for fighting.

It may indeed be said that the institutions of the Republic were responsible for its disarmed condition. But its standing army of 24,000 men was far from representing the entire military force at the Republic's disposal. At particular moments in the course of the seventeenth century it had under the walls of Vienna and elsewhere given proof of its valour. Yet when King John Casimir put into line against the Cossacks a body of Polish troops outnumbering them by three or four to one, his men, when under fire, frequently broke their ranks, and habitually exhibited a spirit of obstinate indiscipline. These troops were drawn from a militia organized somewhat on the German model, being raised under a system of provincial autonomy and levied *en masse* among the *noblesse*, who, under the Constitution, were assumed to possess military aptitude and to be skilled in the profession of arms. This was the result only of a gross confusion of ideas, by which the Polish nobiliary *demos* were likened to the aristocracies of the West, with whom they had nothing in common except the privileges they already held, and their continual efforts to get more. In the seventeenth century the machinery had at least been still worth employing. But a century later it re-

sembled its German analogue in that its formation was undeveloped and its funds exhausted. Like old armour eaten with rust, it was no longer in a condition to adapt itself to the new conditions of war. The metal had never been of very good quality. In Germany in the following century it sufficed that the cause of national independence should appeal to the warlike character of the race for the armour to be refurbished ready to the hands of Scharnhorst and Blücher. Neither the Piast nor the Jagellon kings for their part had anything in common with the Hohenstaufen.

Converted into ploughshares and kitchen-spits, the old iron of the Polish hussars was not worth reforging into swords—not even to fight in defence of Hearth and Home.

The Polish *noblesse*, so long as they were an aristocracy, did possess something of the instinct and capacity for war. But when they had been to a great extent democratized, their tastes and habits became unmilitary. They still furnished some handfuls of heroic fighters, and some distinguished men of war; but the number brought in by the *levée en masse* was a steadily vanishing quantity, and their fighting value, moderate at best, ultimately failed altogether. The nobiliary *demos* were now otherwise occupied, though not solely with pleasure, as has been asserted.

The country was poor, but at all events it had

the rudiments of economic power. It fed itself, ministered to the luxuries of its *grands seigneurs*, and besides exported corn, flax, hemp, potash, wax, wool, timber, and other merchandise of the annual value of some hundreds of millions. For the work of production and commercial exchange the necessary manual labour was supplied by the numerous class of serfs. For the intelligent direction of this body of labour only one class, and that always the same, was available. The *bourgeoisie*, owing to their widespread impoverishment and depression, could offer but a feeble contribution to the work. Shortly before the break-up of Poland the economic life of the country, like the political life, was concentrated in the hands of the powerful *noblesse*.

With the failings inherent in the middle classes of all countries—egotism, narrowness of outlook, obtuse conservatism, they possessed, at least partially, other qualities which are equally their common characteristic—habits of hard work, economy, application, and steadiness. There was nothing about it of a military caste.

In fact, in the eighteenth century, and even in the seventeenth, there was better human war material, as regards both quality and quantity, to be found in that dull class subject to the *corvée*. It was they whose costume was adopted by Kosciuszko, the companion-in-arms of La-

fayette; for it was not in Kosciuszko that the nobiliary *demos* found its best qualified representative. Rather it was in Rejtan the heroic parliamentarian, who strove with voice and gesture to his last breath, and stretched himself on the ground to bar the way against the signatories of the cowardly capitulations—a man hard and enduring as bronze, but not a soldier.

For making war, whether offensive or defensive, Poland was in the eighteenth century in a condition of marked inferiority as compared with its neighbours. The reason lay less in the external form of its military institutions—which could quite easily have been brought up to a state of efficiency—than in the dispositions, natural or acquired, of its own people. The Poles were more and more inclined to the most resolute pacifism, which sharply opposed every effort to render the war machine more effective. While the greater number of the nations of Europe were continually preoccupied with augmenting their combative strength, the Polish people were becoming more and more estranged from militarism, and from the feelings and habits of thought which inspired it; nor were they interested in improvements in the art of war. They had never passed through the schools of the Crusades or of Chivalry; they had not been initiated in the secrets of modern strategy and tactics; and their leaders were defeated by the

Cossack bands whom Chmielnicki had trained on modern principles.

"I well know," wrote Maria Luisa de Gonzaga in 1659, "that the Swedes need peace quite as badly as we do—they, for want of everything necessary for carrying on war; we, for lack of the least idea how war ought to be carried on." Some years later a French officer engaged in the King of Poland's service declared that "he would rather be in Japan than in this army, where there was neither counsel, nor understanding, nor capacity, nor application, nor even order."

The professional warriors of Europe were members of a family party from which their Polish rivals were excluded. The same man would fight under different flags and often indeed would change his camp. Thus in 1707 the battle of Almanza was lost by the English—under the command nominally of Lord Galloway, but really of a Frenchman sprung from an old stock, the Comte de Roumigny—and won by the French, fighting under the command of the English Duke of Berwick, natural son of James II. There was no family connexion between this fraternity and the Polish *noblesse*, however martial, of the type of John Chrysostom Pasek, who wrote his memoirs in the seventeenth century. One can picture that fierce and truculent figure wielding his battle-axe on Turks and

Tatars; but it is impossible to imagine him at Fontenoy saying to the English, "Messieurs, will you shoot first."

On the many battlefields where in the course of the eighteenth century all the armies of Europe faced and fought each other, there never appeared a single Polish soldier; nor did Polish representatives take part in the discussions of the European chanceries, where, nevertheless, the fate of Poland was at this time decided; nor was there ever any Polish diplomat of the European school.

§ 6

Just as she lacked an up-to-date school of war, so the Poland of the eighteenth century possessed no diplomatic service. That it was not her liberal institutions that stood in the way is shown by the examples of Venice and the Netherlands. Moreover, in the preceding century the cabinet of King Ladislas IV was said to employ one of the best diplomatic services in Europe, though its personnel was not Polish. At Vienna, at Paris, at Rome, the Polish agents were Italians—one was Roncalli, of base extraction and baser character, but active and adroit; another was the Capuchin Magni, who cleverly feathered his own nest and became a Cardinal. John Casimir gave the preference to Frenchmen. Presumably Poles were deemed unsuited to, or rather withdrew themselves from,

a profession in which, as Bielfeld, an eighteenth-century writer, observes, "the common notions of justice and sincerity are universally set aside." Our people were slow to appreciate the considerations which, on this principle, render it legitimate to break a promise or to violate a compact.

The Poles would be astounded that a marshal of France in crossing the Rhine to join the Prussians should plume himself on "fulfilling the most glorious mission which could be offered to mortal man"; seeing that the "mission" was directed against the heritage of Charles VI, jointly guaranteed by all the European Powers, and that the enterprise was thus an act of sheer brigandage. Again, when they saw an Empress of Austria pledge her little daughter in order to gain the good graces of a Madame du Barry; or an ambassador of the Most Christian King present himself at the Court of another Empress with instructions grossly offensive to modesty, they were unsophisticated enough to regard these things as scandalous. At the end of the eighteenth century they lived and moved in the Puritan atmosphere described by the austere Warszewicki. Polish public opinion was indeed so evidently penetrated and pervaded by this spirit that the last King of Poland had to be represented at Petersburg by a foreigner, the Frenchman De Beaulieu, *alias* Deboli, official

agent of the Republic and unofficial agent of the Sovereign. This man had to live for twenty years at one of the most licentious Courts of the period; he preserved the austere character of a Cato, and with his scrupulous sense of honour, his plain-dealing frankness, and his positive hatred of all manner of intrigue, he became an object of ridicule and lost all power of usefulness.

Other countries of Europe were, for analogous reasons, placed at a grave disadvantage in their dealings with their neighbours, even if no actual catastrophe occurred. An English statesman of the eighteenth century complained that "the most essential interests of his country were placed in jeopardy by the omission to establish permanent relations with the Continental Powers." Another English envoy, Sir Robert Keith, who was for many years ambassador at Vienna, bore a truly surprising testimony to the negligence of British diplomacy. The first news he received of the alliance negotiated by his Government in 1788 with Prussia and the Netherlands, which was destined to modify profoundly England's relations with Austria, came to him from his Prussian colleague! There resulted an extreme state of tension between the two Powers, partly owing to this agreement, and partly to the Emperor Joseph's intervention in the war between Russia and Turkey; and for five months Keith was left

without instructions from his Government, and without so much as a reply to the fifty-five dispatches in which he asked for them.

The case of Poland presented in this respect is a remarkable peculiarity. It is not to be supposed that the non-dynastic character of the monarchy was responsible for the instability of its foreign policy. In the foreign policy of England, from Cromwell to Pitt, it would be difficult to find any continuity of purpose whatever, apart from dynastic considerations which had nothing to do with the interests of the country. The external policy of Frederick II disconcerted his allies no less than his enemies by its extreme shiftiness. Poland, on the other hand, ever since the sixteenth century, had had peremptorily thrust upon her a foreign policy which never ceased to dominate her fluctuating public life—namely, the defence of her independence and even of her very existence as a State against the growing perils which menaced them. Given the prevailing conditions, it was the best policy to choose, though there was a want of continuity in carrying it out.

The double-faced policy of the later Stuarts in England, and the recognized dualism of the official policy and the secret policy of Louis XV in France, were concentrated in the same hands. The same agents were for the most part employed in executing them. In Poland there were at

work, at certain times, as many diplomacies as there were political parties; even isolated politicians used to lay claim to wield a decisive influence in their country's affairs. In the second half of the eighteenth century, an Orlik or a Bledowski at Paris, a Dzierzanowski at Berlin or at Constantinople, represented no more than the powerful clan of the Potocki. For a long time the future king, Poniatowski, was at Petersburg only as agent to his uncles the Czartoryski. The Grand General of the Crown, John Clement Branicki, and even a simple party-leader, Charles Radziwill, maintained envoys accredited to the Porte. Already in the preceding century the diplomatic transactions, which after Jean Casimir's abdication, issued in the candidature of the Prince of Condé for the throne of Poland, were initiated at Versailles by an envoy of the Grand General of Lithuania, Sapieha.

Often the official representatives of the Polish Government abroad were also the instruments of certain influential personages. In 1788 the envoys to be sent to London and Berlin were nominated at the choice of certain preponderating political groups in the Diet. "We had to nominate persons acceptable to them," wrote the King.

The fact has been classed among the monstrous symptoms of that Polish anarchy whose sad and sinister fame is a byword. It can hardly be denied. In its multiple manifestations, of

which this was one of the most mischievous, the monster ought to be examined at close quarters and ranged side by side for comparison with similar phenomena in the public life of other European countries at the same period.

CHAPTER V

ANARCHY

§ 1

THE partition of Poland is commonly regarded as inaugurating a new era in European politics by an unprecedented crime against public right. But in reality this act of brigandage was quite in keeping with the tradition of past centuries. In seeking to justify it, its authors borrowed arguments from the current phrases of European diplomacy. They appealed to the sanction of "rights" or "interests" on which the States of Europe had always relied in similar cases. A hundred years earlier one writer had been at the pains to draw up a list of these alleged "rights," such as those of the Emperor against France, England, Prussia, or Poland; or those of France over Navarre; or England's over Flanders. Each Power claimed what it chose and took what it could, as opportunity offered. In 1698 Louis XIV planned a divided succession to the throne of Spain under agreement with the Emperor and with England, the Low Countries taking part as arbitrator. What Philip V then retained of the heritage of Charles V was

not more, in proportion, than what was left to Stanislas Poniatowski in 1772 of the patrimony of the Jagellons. The catastrophe which happened to Poland was nearly brought about some years earlier, when it probably formed part of the larger conspiracy plotted by France in 1740 in conjunction with Frederick II, for the dividing of Austria, or of Turkey, which latter had long been contemplated as a certain event.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, *le système copartageant*, the term adopted in diplomatic language, is found in possession of a regular code and a jurisprudence sanctioned by usage. To ensure that the spoil should be equally divided, there was devised a system of *trocs* (exchanges) and *surrogats* (substitutions) and there arose a mass of technical learning associated with such matters as the means of execution and the preparatory disorganization of the States which were destined for dismemberment and pillage. Thus the *déclaration de partage*, announcing to Poland in 1771 the fate in store for her, was prefaced by the granting of a *garantie constitutionnelle*—a veritable shirt of Nessus, in which the co-dividers imprisoned their victim. Poland was forbidden to modify a *régime* of whose defects she was fully conscious by experience and from which she sought to escape. But the work of preparation had begun long before. It involved the breaking-up of

Diets, the conflict of factions, the formation of "confederations," and the fomenting of rebellions. All the disorder which afflicted the unhappy Republic notoriously had its source in foreign influences. Nor was the malevolent intervention confined to Poland: England also was the object of similar machinations. "More stormy than the sea which surrounds her" was the description of her which Voltaire borrowed from Bossuet. "We are in no hurry to see in England a durable ministry," wrote Choiseul in 1767; "I hope that anarchy will not come to an end too soon." In 1764 and 1769, Frederick II and Catharine II had recourse to formal treaties to obtain "guarantees" against any restoration of monarchy in Sweden.

Poland was the only one to succumb to these intrigues; her case was apparently different from that of the others. Although it was evident to all that a continuance of anarchy must bring her to grief, it was by no means her enemies alone who promoted a policy which led straight to anarchy.

"It is proved"—so run the instructions given in 1760 by the Cabinet of Versailles to the Marquis de Paulmy, its envoy to Warsaw—"that the policy formerly adopted by France towards Poland was inappropriate in the case of a government which must be regarded as anarchical. As, however, anarchy is agreeable to the interests

of France, our whole policy should consist in fostering it." This departure from the normally cordial relations between France and Poland was, however, no new thing.

Fate willed in the eighteenth century that all the peoples of Europe—friends or enemies—should work for the King of Prussia; but Fate is often only a name given by unsuccessful men to their own mistakes.

If, then, Poland passed the last years of its independent existence in a state of anarchy, this was in great part due to the influence of the States which supported anarchy in its territory, though ruling as despotic governments in their own. The political condition of Europe at that time might be compared to a feast at which the strongest participants fed themselves at the expense of the weaker; Poland's part being that of Polonius, "not to eat, but to be eaten."* For such a country in such a world disaster was inevitable. It is imprudent not to growl when in company with wolves. However disputable in theory, the opinion prevailing up to our own day and sanctioned by practice has been that the moral law of nations is different from that which binds individuals.

Yet opinions change, and it may be that from

* "KING. Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?—HAMLET. At supper.—KING. At supper! where?—HAMLET. Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him."—*Hamlet*, Act iv, sc. 3.

this point of view the Europe of to-morrow will differ from that of yesterday. In no other hypothesis lies any hope of reconstituting a Polish State. A lamb struggling with wolves, the Poland of the eighteenth century could but be devoured. Unless the wolves have by now changed into sheep, to recall the lamb to life would be but a vain and cruel enterprise.

§ 2

In the eighteenth century, then, anarchy was far from being the unique product of the country in which flourished the *liberum veto*.* In 1701, William of Orange, supported by the energy of Somers, was faced by a Parliamentary Opposition which refused him a subsidy for the defence of the country. Indignant at the unpatriotic attitude of the Tory majority in the Commons, the freeholders of the county of Kent gave expression in a petition, couched in measured terms and presented in regular form, to the protests which arose all over the country. Their action was legal; the right of petition was recognized by the *Bill of Rights*; yet the petitioners were imprisoned for two months, until the end of the session. As regards anarchy, it would be difficult to find in the history of Poland at the same period a similar act of violence.

* Otherwise termed "the unanimous vote." In the Polish Diet any one member had the right to demand that a decision should be reached unanimously.—*Tr.*

Let us pursue the comparison with England: "A nation convulsed by faction, a throne assailed by the fiercest invective, a House of Commons hated and despised by the nation"—a striking picture of political disintegration: Macaulay * *pinxit*—which belongs to the history of England between 1755 and 1762. But still darker times were to come. In 1780 the Houses of Parliament were surrounded by a furious mob, threatening to invade the Commons. The members took to flight, cutting their way out, sword in hand. England's robust constitution enabled her to pass victoriously through this ordeal.

A comparison of Poland with England under similar conditions shows some unhealthy symptoms common to both. One of the most salient in the case of Poland was the enfeeblement of the functions of government by waste of energy, specially by the failure of the magistracy taking part in provincial self-government. In England the same important *rôle* was assigned to various corporate bodies of like origin and purpose. During the period 1748–1767 even the Corporation of the City of London was for a time almost incapable of fulfilling the duties of its office.† The elected members either refused to act or were found unfit for the task. It is true there

* *Essays*, "William Pitt."

† This is an over-statement. The elected persons who were unable to serve because disqualified were of course replaced by others.—*Tr.*

was a particular reason for this, which, however, was in itself a sign of an unhealthy political and social condition. The electors of the City desired to build, without too much expense, a Mansion House for the Lord Mayor, and to this end they voted for those citizens who through infirmity, or on account of their religious convictions, were unable to discharge the duties of office, but who at the same time were rich enough to pay the considerable fines involved by their refusal.

In Poland the general exhaustion was also evident in the apathy of the masses towards certain vital problems which confronted them and called for their attention. Their tendency was to enjoy the present hour without care for the morrow. Poland's feeble resistance to certain enterprises of her neighbours was assuredly one of the results of this moral predisposition.

To return to England. "In the period between the Reformation and the Revolution England had been convulsed by some of the strongest passions of which large bodies of men are susceptible. . . . Religious enthusiasm . . . the enthusiasm of patriotism elicited by a deadly contest with a foreign enemy, the enthusiasm of liberty struggling with despotism, and the enthusiasm of loyalty struggling with innovation, had been the animating principles of large bodies of Englishmen. . . . They have all the common property of kindling in large bodies of men an

heroic self-sacrifice, of teaching them to subordinate material to moral ends, and of thus raising the tone of political life. But about the middle of the eighteenth century," observes Lecky, "these enthusiasms had now gradually subsided. . . . The nation gradually sank into a condition of selfish apathy . . . the long war of the Spanish Succession failed signally to arouse the energies of the nation. . . . It was carried on chiefly by means of subsidies. . . . It appeared as if all interest in those great qustions which had convulsed England in the time of the Commonwealth and of the Revolution had died away—as if even the old courage of the nation was extinct. . . . 'I apprehend,' wrote old Horace Walpole, when the news of the arrival of the Pretender was issued, 'that the people may perhaps look on and cry, "Fight dog! fight bear!" if they do no worse.' 'England,' wrote Henry Fox, 'Wade says, and I believe, is for the first-comer, and if you can tell whether the 6000 Dutch and ten battalions of English, or 5000 French and Spaniards will be here first, you know our fate.' 'The French are not come —God be thanked! But had 5000 landed in any part of this island a week ago, I verily believe the entire conquest of it would not have cost them a battle.'" (Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, i. 467, 468.)

The invasion of Poland was a more formidable

matter than that, inasmuch as the Russians outnumbered the Poles at Maciejowice. To oppose them Kosciuszko had not obtained the 100,000 men voted by the Diet in a moment of enthusiasm, but not called to the colours. The Poles disliked the establishment of a strong military organization. They were not alone in entertaining this sentiment. "A standing army is but a troop of slaves, and it is unworthy of a free people to introduce slavery into its midst. . . . If swords are necessary for the defence of the country, they should not be put into servile hands." These vehement protestations are not those of a demagogue, of whom there were many in England in the eighteenth century. The author is the grave writer Blackstone, who published in 1765 the first volume of his learned *Commentaries on the Laws of England.*

Both Walpole and the elder Pitt renounced the compulsory raising of land forces for the defence of the country, which, alas, remained to this extent undefended even to the present day. The result was that in 1757 the news of the disembarkation of 20,000 Frenchmen provoked a panic, to which the men in power th mselves succumbed. "We are undone!" writes Chesterfield. "The Empire is no more!" answered Pitt. No one saw any way of escape but through foreign help—from Germany or the Netherlands.

Poland too knew what it was to be seized with

panic and despair; to dread an imminent, inevitable catastrophe, and to call to neighbouring States for intervention. She had experienced these states of depression and they contributed to the paralysis of her forces. It has been suggested that Poland was endowed with a prophetic sense, mysterious and inexplicable, in compensation for its inability to take note of present realities. It is simpler to recognize that the same causes brought about a similar moral crisis in the two countries. England triumphed. By what means, and by the aid of what circumstances? This is a question which it concerns us to examine.

§ 3

Already from the first half of the eighteenth century the abuse of Parliamentarism had encountered an element of resistance, in which, with the guarantee of a more stable political and social order, the base of a durable compromise between the House of Commons and the Throne could be found. The twenty years' government of Walpole sufficed for this. The success of this statesman seems to have been due less to his personal talent than to the methods which he employed, and which, in the hands of his successors, showed the same happy result. Could these methods have been applied to Poland? And if so, why were they not at least tried?

Are the Poles themselves to blame? Have they here any cause for regret?

It is worthy of note that Walpole, as the minister of two successive sovereigns of German origin, had a replica in Poland in the person of the Saxon Brühl, who, in the name of his master, had from 1733 to 1763 despotically governed Saxony, but vainly attempted to do the same in Warsaw. In temperament, political genius, and manner the two men rather resembled each other. Why did they not experience the same fortune?

The chief instrument of influence and power used by the Prime Minister of the two first Georges was corruption, practised openly, in part officially, and extended into every sphere of public life. Walpole bought everything and everybody: the King by augmenting his Civil List, the Queen by adding £40,000 to her dower, dissenting pastors by pensioning their widows. Bargaining for and obtaining higher and higher credit for his secret budget, he bought the Opposition *en bloc* by means of "rotten boroughs," and in detail by giving individual Members of Parliament to understand that "each man has his price."

According to the facts as accepted by Polish historians of the new school, the lack of skill shown by Brühl, as by his predecessors and successors, in making use of the same expedient,

appears utterly inexplicable. "The venality of high functionaries," writes Korzon, one of these pessimists, "was a general condition in the Europe of the eighteenth century; but nowhere did it involve consequences so terrible and so infamous as in Poland."

The same historian estimates that from 1714 to 1771 150,000 ducats were spent by the Russian Embassy at Warsaw in bribes. Next to Russia, the Power which distributed most money in Poland in the course of the eighteenth century was France, for Prussia was traditionally stingy and Austria not less habitually impecunious. In fact, we know the amount disbursed at Warsaw from 1752 to 1754 by one of the most active and influential agents employed by the Cabinet of Versailles—the Comte de Broglie. It amounted to 206,000 livres a year. This, French or Russian, was the source of the anarchic propaganda which Brühl, or the party of Constitutional reform commanded by Czartoryski, was engaged in combating. From Poland, where his master possessed vast domains, and still more from docile Saxony, the minister drew considerable resources. "The family," as the Czartoryski and their dependents were called, were rich enough to outbid such competitors in the market of consciences. The conclusion reached is that the trafficking suspected by certain detractors of Poland at this

epoch had no existence, or at least that it had not the character attributed to it.

Twenty Polish magnates expended more than 206,000 livres a year on their households, and Jean-Clément Branicki, Grand General of the Crown, entered on the list of pensioners of the King for 20,000 livres, spent four times this sum in one of the entertainments which he offered to the envoy of His Most Christian Majesty in his magnificent residence of Bialystok. He did not sell himself apparently for the 20,000 livres. As an individual he carried out his own policy, which, even if it were framed, as is often the case, agreeably to his own personal ambition or his caprice, was nevertheless sincerely intended to conform to the interests of his country. To turn his influence to account, this kinglet more powerful than some sovereigns treated with kings and contracted alliances with them; he accepted subsidies so moderate as not to weigh on his conscience; on the contrary, he found in them a proud satisfaction, a testimony to his importance, and a pledge of support from high quarters.

In the lowest class, and even exceptionally in the highest, some instances of base venality were to be met with; nevertheless the contagion did not spread to the whole, as in England at the same period, nor was it possible to found on such a basis the *régime* of a durable political

dictatorship. If the foreign money spent so lavishly in Poland had exerted as large and strong an influence as Walpole's campaign of corruption did in England, Polish history would doubtless have followed another course. The policy of Russia in particular would have gained a complete triumph by the exclusion of German influence, and the realization of her own ideal of a Pan-Slav hegemony. But the much-abused moral of the Polish people withstood venality just as its political organization found no place for "rotten boroughs" and the corrupt traffic in constituencies.

Yet one Polish historian has thought fit to write that "Poland alone has incurred the disgrace of being ruled by a venal king." This is an instructive example of the hold obtained in this country by foreign influence over native writers by perverting their judgement of facts. The historian ought to have known that at various times kings of Sweden and even kings of England have figured, like Stanislas-Augustus and Branicki, in the list of pensioners of the King of France—not to speak of Germany, where, according to the testimony of its own writers, French influence was carried over golden bridges thrown across the Rhine from Mayence to Cologne for the benefit of princes reigning in that region.

"In no age and in no country have State

trials been conducted with a more flagrant disregard for justice and for decency." * This denunciation is, for once, that of an English historian in criticism of his own country. The reference is to the reign of Charles II. Fielding, too, in one of his pamphlets, writes that he knows of but one case in which the impartiality of an English judge is assured: it is when he has nothing to receive from either party, and the epithet "Trading Justices" belongs to English history of the eighteenth century. Some of our pessimist historians, trying their utmost to discover similar signs of venality in the Polish tribunals of the same period, have failed to find them.

The Polish character is marked by grave faults, but not the worst faults. Our people may be given to inveterate discontent and a too venturesome idealism; but they are still Kosciuszko's own compatriots and no hucksters or mercenaries; indeed their mind is perhaps only too thoroughly alien from the spirit of bargain and barter. Anarchical the nation may have been, but not so base as, in its misfortune, it came retrospectively to represent itself. And the opinion that anarchy was the effective instrument of its destruction demands careful examination. There is no more illogical deduction than *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc.*

* Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, i. 7.

§ 4

The idea which Polish historians have themselves formed of the political customs of their country is, as the references and quotations brought forward by them show, essentially founded on the reports of certain foreign observers, diplomatic agents or travellers of the same species and authority as Méhée de la Touche, the notorious pamphleteer. And he again is a model of veracity in comparison with his German congeners—Essen, Kausch, Schultz, and their like, whose writings have obtained most credit in the land which they calumniated.

More convincing at first sight would be the general impression produced on the contemporary world by the Poland of the *liberum veto* and the Confederations. From the middle of the eighteenth century she assumed the appearance of being, like Turkey, in a moribund condition. Bending over her pillow, the bearers of heroic remedies or of exhortations *in extremis*—Rousseau following Mably—seemed to announce her approaching end. This country was, nevertheless, not the only one thought to be the prey of anarchy and made the subject of alarming forecasts: "It is quite easy to foresee," wrote one of these prophets of evil in 1760, "that in twenty years' time England will have been utterly ruined and have forfeited her liberty."

At the end of the term indicated, the other prophet declared the fulfilment of the prophecy and "the complete decadence of the island kingdom." A little later Joseph II pronounced the ruin consummated: "The great Empire which held France in check is fallen completely and for ever. It has descended to the rank of second-rate Powers, such as Sweden and Denmark, and in all likelihood will, after the example of these last, fall under the rule of Russia." Frederick II shared this conviction, as also did Mallet du Pan, and both detected the cause of the foreseen catastrophe in the same political corruption that was deemed to have led Poland to her extinction.

By her institutions and customs Prussia in the second half of the eighteenth century was the antipodes of England and Poland; yet an acute observer—not a De la Touche nor an Essen—Mirabeau wrote: "No kingdom has ever exhibited so rapid an advance towards ruin." And this pronouncement represented the general feeling. Mably compared the work of Frederick the Great to a house built on the sand, and, writing confidentially to his crony, Catharine II, foretold that the edifice would soon crumble away. "In five years," answered Grimm with assurance.

Mirabeau saw Prussia on the morrow of Frederick's decease, and gave proof of a just

power of observation. Four years later occurred Reichenbach, and twenty years later Jena. The injury done to the power of Prussia by the partition of her provinces in 1807 was quite as great as any inflicted on Poland by the "co-partitioners" of 1772. Prussia escaped complete disaster and promptly rose again after her defeats. Thanks to what? Was it to the strong organization which Frederick II had given her, and which he defied his successors to displace? "Even if they wished it, they could not!" But according to the opinion of a good judge, the recovery was due to the destruction of the scheme of extreme centralization and despotism erected by the conqueror of Rosbach, and to the intervention of the liberated elements of national life and autonomous government in the provinces and communes. This is the same as saying that Prussia was saved by the very things which had been thought to cause the fall of Poland.

§ 5

Other causes doubtless helped to determine in different directions the destinies of the two countries. As in Poland, so in Prussia, provincial life was centred in the nobility. But this element was hardly the same in both cases. The Prussian nobility kept the essential character of an aristocracy, but preserved besides many ties

with the popular masses founded on the surviving remains of ancient feudal institutions, which were quite foreign to the Slav race.

Lastly, both England and Prussia had the advantage over Poland in a combination of favourable circumstances. The first had to defend her independence against the France of Louis XV and Mme. de Pompadour, and not against the Prussia of Frederick the Great and the Russia of the great Catharine, whilst the 20,000 French soldiers which made the great Chatham tremble never landed. But in the course of this struggle, or of that which fifty years later caused the same symptoms of distress, neither the truly anarchical character of political life in England nor the unstable, in some respects even chaotic, form of its institutions, prevented it from developing a powerful effort which was in the end victorious. According to the opinion of high authorities, it was these very features of its constitution, assuring free play to its energies both individual and collective, which gave England precisely that marked superiority over adversaries who appeared to be more strongly organized. And this had already been foreseen by Montesquieu.*

Prussia, on the other hand, was held up on

* The insular situation of the country is left out of the discussion; the question whether and in what measure its advantages are balanced by the disadvantages is too large for consideration here.—*Author's Note.*

the very edge of the abyss after Jena by the same helping hand to which she already owed her recovery after Künersdorf, and which was still to sustain her through the decisive ordeal of the years 1812–1815 and to aid her in emerging from it greater than before. The fourth sovereign of the Holstein-Gottorp * dynasty walked in the footsteps of the first.

Poland, for the reasons already given, could expect no help from without. No tie of political or dynastic solidarity existed between any of the European Powers and herself. *Vae soli!* But her institutions still counted for something; moreover, she applied herself to reforming them with considerable success; and this, too, in the very midst of the crisis which preceded the final catastrophe. Everywhere the Revolution shook the stability of absolutism—the *régime* most remote from that of Poland, yet in no degree more stable than hers, nor better adapted to the needs and requirements of the other European communities.

* Peter III of Russia was the first Emperor of the Holstein-Gottorp line (1762). The fourth was Alexander I (1801–1825). —*Tr.*

CHAPTER VI

THE CRISIS

§ 1

"EVERY kingdom is passing through a crisis," wrote Catharine in September 1780. She might have been reading Rousseau's "Considerations on the Government of Poland": "Republics, monarchies . . . all the leading nations are groaning—each crushed under the weight of its own mass." They were indeed groaning, trying hard to rid themselves of the heavy load of absolute monarchical government — the very system which the Poles were always being reproached for not having adopted!

The form of rule under which the Poles lived in the middle of the eighteenth century certainly had grave defects. But, if not better than others, it was at any rate not worse, and the nation was busy amending it. Although its special historical development had kept their country somewhat aloof from the general life of Europe, it was not uninfluenced by the reforming or revolutionary tendencies which were beginning to declare themselves at this period. These two movements—of reform and revolution—

were advancing side by side under a common impulse derived from the growth of philosophic study, the progress of natural science, and the encouragement of the spirit of criticism. Poland's touch with the liberal movement was perhaps not very close. Neither on its political nor on its social side did it appeal at all forcibly to the country of Modrzewski and Orzechowski: ever since the sixteenth century liberal ideas had been current in Poland under various forms, of which Europe at large was not cognizant till the eighteenth century—a fact which, strange as it may seem, the West might do well to consider.

For Poland there was no need to destroy the theocratic basis of State Absolutism; for within her borders the thing had no existence: such absolutism as she had ever known had been abolished long ago. It would have been a purely otiose proceeding to seek by philosophic speculations to restore to their legitimate possessor, the people, the prerogatives of supreme authority: Poland had already, two centuries earlier, recognized popular supremacy as in accordance with the natural and rightful order of things. Finding in Poland a terrain unsuited to the dissemination of free thought, religious scepticism took but feeble root. There was lacking the impulse which elsewhere gave free play to political aspirations and passions. If

not in outward form, at least in spirit, the vast majority of the Poles at this period remained Christian, attached, however, to the original and primitive doctrine of Christianity, repudiating the pagan influences that had sullied it, and discovering in it a religious sanction for their Constitutional ideal—*The King the Servant of the State.*

The Polish writers and statesmen of this period were in fact unfamiliar with the whole range of ideas which preoccupied their Western contemporaries. They had other things to think about. One of their number, Karnicki, writing in 1709, fancied he had discovered the source of his country's misfortunes in the antagonism between the three elements—the royal authority, the aristocratic supremacy, and the pretensions of the nobiliary *demos*, which being evenly balanced neutralized and paralysed each other. His notion of a remedy was to give a decided preponderance to the *petite noblesse*, and to reorganize the Government as a republic. Another political writer, the philosopher-king Stanislas Leszczynski (1773), taking a diametrically opposite view, perceived that the essential fault in the same three elements of the Government was the utter want of balance among them, and this he thought to redress by a drastic cutting-down both of the royal power and of the royal responsibility. His French connexions

did not hinder his viewing the whole matter strictly from the Polish point of view, especially as regards the principle of decentralization. This, indeed, he sought to apply throughout the entire political and administrative domain, and he even desired to preserve intact the tradition of the "unanimous vote," excluding it solely in the case of elections. But on the eve of the "Four-Year Diet"* this latter principle was almost unanimously given up. Konarski, a pupil of the philosopher-king, published a book in four volumes which is one continuous plea for the abolition of the *liberum veto*.

§ 2

Konarski's great work appeared just as Poniatowski came to the throne. The ideas which inspired his book were also the motive force of reforms that were already being carried out. In their object, however, they had nothing in common with those of the reformers or revolutionists of Western Europe; on the contrary, they were intended to strengthen and develop the authority of the Crown and the military organization—the very institutions which in the West were widely condemned as the worst features in the established order of things, and were on that account attacked with the utmost violence.

* The "Four-Year Diet" sat from 1788 to 1792.

Konarski and his followers seem to have known nothing of Voltaire and his school. The political economist, Staszic, passes them by in silence. Kollatay, undeservedly called a Jacobin, makes mention of the greater number of purely political writers in France, only to leave their literature on one side, in favour of the work of Quesnay and Dupont, which he finds of much greater interest.

In the domain of economic problems, Poland had ceased to be an Atlantis isolated in the European ocean. Her phases of development and her national experiences were the same as those of other countries, just as were the ills that afflicted her and demanded identical remedies. The intellectual sympathy between Poland and the Western nations became also much closer, and though in the exchange of ideas she received much, she had much to give which was by no means of negligible importance.

The Polish historian, Korzon, declared that all Polish legislation, as well as the whole course of Polish finance and trade since the end of the fifteenth century, had been one continuous application—the most largely conceived and the most exclusive—of the "physiocratic" * system! He

* The term *Physiocracy* was coined to signify "government according to the natural order." As a political tenet it is defined as "the doctrine that the earth is the sole ultimate source of wealth"; by a *physiocrat* is meant a philosopher of the school of François Quesnay (1694–1774). Some *physiocrats* taught that only tillers of the soil ought to govern the country!—*Tr.*

appears to have been thinking only of one side of the Quesnay doctrine—that which chiefly interested the Poles, although it was only a subordinate point—namely, the prominence attributed to agriculture as the principal factor in national production. But the French economist and his followers attached special importance to their notion of natural laws as an intangible basis of the whole social organization. This theory, which Rousseau repudiated, would have been equally objectionable to the Poles—had their attention ever been drawn to it—for it was quite contrary to the whole drift of their political habits. Yet there was one point at which Quesnay's idea was not alien to the Polish mind, insomuch that a German observer, Hüppe, fancied that some Polish influence, at least indirect, had helped to shape its constitution.

One practical outcome, and that not the least important, of the teaching popularized by Quesnay was the impulse given to the freeing of all kinds of production from the bonds of the feudal system which paralysed them. To promote this end Turgot * took a decisive step by his regulations of March 1776, proclaiming a partial liberation of labour; still, as a matter of fact, the first impetus given to such a policy, either

* Minister of Finance under Louis XVI. He suppressed internal customs and proposed to establish freedom of trade and of industry.

in France or in Europe generally, proceeded from a small volume published at Nancy in 1733 by the Polish philosopher-king Leszczynski. In one passage of this tractate he wrote, "Who is it that makes our fortunes and our means of existence if not the plebeians, our foster-fathers, tilling the ground unceasingly for our profit? What else are the common people but the foundation on which the Republic is built, and which bears the whole weight of it?" The author boldly draws the conclusion that all the peasants should be enfranchised, and that the land they cultivate should be divided up amongst them. The little book had a great vogue; a French translation appeared in 1749, and two other editions in 1753 and 1764. It is not likely that it escaped the attention of the French "physiocrats," having anticipated their earliest publications by a good ten years. Quesnay's first treatises did not see the light till 1756. Seven years later Grimm spoke of the philosopher-king's little work as "universally known these dozen years past." Moreover, the author of *La Voix libre du Citoyen* could not remain unknown to the literary public of any country, and having settled at Weissenburg, on the borders of Alsace, in 1719, he was soon in close touch with the intellectual world of France. From 1736 his house near Paris became an active centre of intellectual culture and progressive

reform. Scientific and literary men flocked to his Lunéville Court, and in 1750 and the following year a lively interest was aroused by a wordy warfare waged between Leszczynski and the author of *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*, whose work had been "crowned" by the Dijon Academy; clearly he was bound to take an interest in the literary and political activity of his august antagonist.

The prejudiced pessimism characteristic of our Polish history-writers of the new school has had nothing but disdain for this precursor of "physiocratic" doctrine and his Polish pupils, Poplawski, Strojnowski, Staszic, Kollatay, Czacki, Podlecki, Switkowski. Korzon even denounces them as "incorrigibles"—an unjust charge to which their writings supply a complete refutation. The Abbé Strojnowski demands for the cultivators of the soil "an effective guarantee for their property and their liberty." In the *Sketch of a Constitution* which he drew up for his country, Kollatay reserves to the landed proprietors the sole legislative and executive power; but he pronounces in favour of enlarging this privileged class and of extending the benefits of liberty as widely as possible. Moreover, he had the candour to enforce his teaching by personal example; in 1788 he enfranchised his peasantry and gave over to them the whole of his landed property of which they had been the cultivators. In

this he was but following in the footsteps of a large number of members of the Polish aristocracy.

It is undeniable that in the eighteenth century Poland had fallen from her high estate in the intellectual and political firmament of Europe which she had occupied in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Yet she retained something of the feeling of superiority of which she had been conscious. True, it was unlikely that, in her present humiliated condition she could take the initiative in any phase of the liberal movement. But there was no silencing the evidence of history when it testified to the part she had once played in the struggle for freedom. In the annals of Europe at that time there had been no example to rival that of King John Casimir, who, faced in 1651 with the double menace of a Swedish invasion and a Cossack rebellion, took the famous vow by which he solemnly bound himself to spare no sacrifice in order to break the bonds of serfdom.

This happened more than half a century before Vauban upheld, single-handed, the cause of the unhappy people who were liable to forced labour, and sought to lighten the heavy burdens which crushed them by proposing a moderate measure of fiscal reform—a courageous step which drew upon him the displeasure of his sovereign.

As regards both theory and practice, the

political and social *régime* of Poland remained, even up to the time of her decline, so penetrated with the same ideal of freedom and humanity which had inspired her glorious past, that its influence remained clearly discernible, even if only in the generosity of her impulses.

§ 3

Too exclusively designed for the benefit of a single class of the community—too much inclined also towards compromise with State absolutism—the "physiocratic" doctrine offered itself as a sure guarantee for the conservation of the existing political and social order. Such a system clearly could not remain long in favour in a world stricken with the miasma of revolution. After Quesnay—Rousseau. The latter represented a distinct advance on the former. The struggle between commercialism and "physiocracy" was a mere prologue to the drama in which Socialism was to intervene as arbiter.

Poland took no more than a far-off interest in these varying turns in the struggle. Its "physiocrats," such as Poplawski and Staszic, applauded Turgot's reforms and blamed the reaction in which a stop was put to his work and its fruits destroyed. In 1775, a year before his fall, there was published at Warsaw in a Polish translation by Bars, a Pole of French upbringing, Rousseau's *Discours sur les Trois États*, which

made a sensation. Two years afterwards, at the "Thursdays" given by King Stanislas-Augustus, John Wybicki, the secretary of a Commission of Legislative Reform appointed in 1776, read out, amid great appreciation, some of the "Patriotic Letters," in which occurred a sympathetic reference to the French Third Estate. Two periodical publications, the *Historical Memorial*, dating from 1782, and the *Journal of Commerce*, which appeared in 1786, were founded for the dissemination of Rousseau's views. An Education Commission established schools in which "reform" propaganda was actively promoted, the youth of the noble class being diligently taught that the *bourgeoisie* were a highly respectable class of the community, whose representatives had even occasionally—as in ancient Greece and Rome—wielded the powers of government.

While adhering loyally up to the last to "physiocratic" principles, Kollatay himself was not wholly opposed to granting the *bourgeois* element an enlarged share in the government of the country; only he would have doled out this concession rather grudgingly, confining it to such as owned land. But there were other writers of his way of thinking—Abbé Iezierski, Staszic, Rzewuski—who, having adopted the latter idea, carried it much further, and declared themselves in favour of complete equality.

They were under the influence of Rousseau, though not without resenting the muddle-headedness which was so perceptible in his work. The writings of this disappointing thinker are full of contradictions; they contributed not a little to exasperate the chaotic conflict of forces amid which the revolutionary ideal in the West was bound to sink. In Poland, where the soil was full of promise for social amelioration, the cause of reform was hindered by it and the work of the "Four-Year Diet" put in considerable jeopardy.

Staszic, making an effort to reconcile with his own teaching the doctrine of the *Étude sur l'Origine de l'Inégalité* and the *Contrat social*, allowed that men were on an equality as regards their rights but not as to the manner of making use of them. The Polish legislators of 1788–1792 did not succeed in extricating themselves from the errors which marred the usefulness of the master-teacher of Geneva; yet he, for his part, was to some extent influenced by contact with Polish thought.

§ 4

It might be asserted that in their common repudiation of State bureaucracy, exaltation of the individual, government of everybody by everybody, and the exercise of arbitrary power

by popular assemblies, the political theories of the *Social Contract* and the practice of the Polish *régime* were closely akin. The Poles, in their then subdued mood, were too modest to admit the possibility of Rousseau having borrowed his "inspirations" from them. Any discoverable coincidence, they thought, must of course be purely fortuitous; and when, years afterwards—as late as 1769—Wielhorski, a Polish refugee in France, accidentally brought to Rousseau's knowledge the existence of such coincidences of thought and teaching, the great man—so they were led to suppose—was greatly astonished.

In truth any such notion as that of an accidental coincidence was as gratuitous as it was improbable. The leaders of the eighteenth-century philosophical and political movement in the West were not lacking in accurate information about Polish affairs. The works of men like Montesquieu bear witness to the fact. In political and intellectual circles Polish institutions were a standing topic of discussion, and at a sitting of the Grand Council of Venice, the Doge drew arguments from Polish politics. But after 1750 the Genevan philosopher evidently had special reasons for showing that he was thoroughly well informed about Polish affairs and problems. It was not at random that, four years afterwards, in writing the *Contrat social* he chose two countries, England and Poland, as

object-lessons. Again, in treating of the relations in which the organs of Government in Poland stood to each other, and of the impotence to which they were reduced by their individual independence, he showed an intimate acquaintance with their mechanism and mode of working, to the defects of which he was fully alive. That he, nevertheless, drew inspiration from this Polish model was due to the fact that neither logic nor a sense of sequence formed part of his mental equipment. The *Contrat social* belongs approximately to 1754, and in 1756, in the seventh of his *Lettres de la Montagne*, we have the author avowing that the *régime* he has commended for adoption by the entire world is only good for a Government "that has nothing else to occupy itself with."

Between the theorist of the *Contrat social* and the fervent partisans of the *régime* of which the *liberum veto* formed part, there was far from being perfect accord. It is indeed open to doubt whether, in Rousseau's own mind, any such harmony existed between the doctrines which he professed and the principles deducible from them. According to Faguet, a French critic, they led straight to "a thoroughgoing and completely organized system of tyranny." An unlimited despotism of the masses could only be regarded by enlightened Polish opinion as a thing to be utterly repudiated.

The irony of the situation was that, at the moment when Jean-Jacques was undertaking to defend the Polish Constitution, the very features of it which he judged most praiseworthy were just those which Polish opinion heartily condemned, and was determined to get rid of! In the sphere of politics, the movement of ideas in the West, whether for reform or for revolution, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, was in the contrary direction to the tendencies and aspirations which prevailed in Poland. It represented a phase of intellectual evolution which this country had already passed through and left behind, and Rousseau committed an anachronism when he undertook to defend the *liberum veto* as founded on the "natural right of societies." In the same way Mably, in his *Du Gouvernement et des Lois de Pologne*, was equally astray when he thought he saw in the prerogatives of the sovereign power—which he deemed excessive—one of the vices of the Polish Constitution.

During three centuries Poland had run through the whole cycle of ideas inspired, with irresistible fascination, by the spirit of liberty. She had made full and thorough trial of every expedient by which those ideas could be translated into practicable form. Already, in 1746, a project of political reform, presented to the Cabinet of Versailles by the party which was at that time the most powerful in the country, adopted a

Constitution which approached the English model, "the majority of the citizens of the Republic being convinced that the circumstances of the time and the menacing attitude of their neighbours demand the suppression of the elective form of monarchical government." Even so, the plan now recommended was no new thing. It harmonized with a tradition which went back nearly a hundred years, to the time when Queen Maria Luisa de Gonzaga and her friends were seeking to promote the selection of the Duc d'Enghien as King of Poland—a tradition of which Sobieski later seems to have become the depositary.

Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that the Poles, at a particular turning-point in their history, threw overboard the cause which it was their special glory to maintain—the cause of popular supremacy. At the very moment when they seemed to be turning their backs upon it they remained firmly attached to it in theory, never ceasing to cherish it as an ideal, even when its defects were most in evidence. But they could not, as a matter of practical politics, help seeing that the elective character of the kingship was answerable for their being plunged in a crisis which threatened their very existence as a nation. They were obliged to acknowledge that, with the existing system maintained in its entirety, they had no hope of salvation from

their enemies. Therefore, moved by considerations frankly opportunist, they resigned themselves to a partial sacrifice. Staszic shares Rousseau's indignation against "the cursed rule to which the political order of Europe is subjected." Even Rzewuski and Felix Potocki and the future defenders of anarchy against the work of the "Four-Year Diet" admit that "the heredity of the Crown is a first step in the road that leads to the forfeiture of liberty." But *primum vivere*—to live is the first and supreme necessity: "Since the power wielded by each of the Estates, and the respect paid to it, are at present exactly proportionate to its capacity for hurting and hindering the others, it has to be acknowledged that for the moment an enlightened despotism is the best form of government." *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.** In the Europe of the latter half of the eighteenth century, between the upper millstone of Prussian Frederick and the nether millstone of Russian Catharine, the maintenance of the Polish paradox had become an enterprise too impossible to maintain.

Yet, in the strife waged round it, the most desperate of Polish Conservatives posed as the defenders of the anarchic *status quo*. While swallowing whole the political theories of extreme French revolutionaries, they were compelled to

* Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vii, 20.

repudiate the same principles when applied on their social side and to denounce them as Utopian. On the other hand, their adversaries honoured Rousseau in the domain of sociology as the thinker of supreme genius; yet on the political side scouted him as a Utopian dreamer.

Opportunism, under other names, occurs in the annals of every period and of every country. But perhaps at no moment in the history of any other people has opportunism played so decisive a part as in Poland during the critical period of the years 1764–1792. The game, in which the stakes were her fate and future, was played between the spirit of reform represented by the most sane and enlightened element in the nation, and the spirit of blind conservatism supported by outside influences; and when play ceased, the lot of Poland had been decided.

§ 5

In the field of politics the only point on which Poland, a prey to reform, and Western Europe, a victim to revolution, could meet without clashing was cosmopolitanism; though on this subject there was a certain divergence of ideas. In France the only "citizen of the universe" who assumed this title without mental reserves, so far as could be seen, was a German, Anacharsis Clootz, and he remained the solitary specimen of the genus. In Germany there were others, but

they were—poets! When it came to translating cosmopolitanism into practice, the French Convention would have none of it. The Republic was not to be cajoled into abandoning any French interests to serve "internationalism." On this point it was narrow-minded and "irreconcilable" enough to follow in the footsteps of the old Monarchy. Deeply immersed as it was in the humanitarian stream which was running so strongly, philosophy in the person of D'Alembert repudiated the idea of such a sacrifice; and the "declarations of peace" addressed to the European peoples by revolutionized France had for their epilogue the career of Napoleon.

In Germany the cosmopolitanism of Lessing, of Schiller, or of Wieland had as its antithesis the militarist spirit of Gleim and Scharnhorst, which was soon to get the better of its rival. In Poland the humanitarian ideal had, at least from the sixteenth century, gained the acceptance of the great mass of right-thinking and reflective people, and they had remained staunch to it. They had no hatred for foreigners, even those who were hostile and aggressive; they had no desire to impose their own language, manners, or religion on others; they had no proselytizing zeal, no tendency to exclusiveness. It may be that this spirit of tolerance towards other nations implied a certain want of attachment to their own social ideals. Their patriotism found fuller

expression in the field of political institutions, where the originality of their genius is most strongly marked.

At the "Four-Year Diet" the most ardent defenders of the integrity of the national soil, the firmest foes of the abandonment of Gdansk to Prussia—such as Hulewicz or Suchorzewski—were the same who shortly afterwards declared themselves willing to become Prussians, Russians, or Austrians if they could find no other way of escape from "the slavery of the elective sovereignty." The manners of these people were in other ways highly eclectic: they dressed themselves in turn as Hungarians or Turks or Swedes or Frenchmen; and even before they took to drink, they must needs wait for Augustus the Saxon to set them the example.

In the eighteenth century, under the conditions in which these men had to live in the heart of a Europe so little in harmony with them, such mental and moral characteristics became a source of weakness, and their ability to resist the insidious influences or the open assaults coming from without was assuredly diminished. But the Poles of to-day are not those of yesterday, and who knows what Europe itself will be to-morrow?

§ 6

Like the final catastrophe in Poland, the cataclysm of the Revolution which shook nearly all Europe simultaneously was preceded by attempts at reform which were intended to stave it off. These preventive measures, whatever their character, were invariably failures. In Western Europe they tended to assume a form that was theoretical rather than practical. Professedly based on "philosophy," they were applied by a set of visionaries. Frederick II was himself great at theories; he believed in the omnipotence of formulæ and in the constructive efficacy of words in the building up of things. Joseph II surpassed even Frederick in this respect; while in France Turgot thought to work wonders by means of a *tabula rasa* and a few pen-strokes, with which, when they had become an edict, he aspired to determine his country's future.

Another feature common to all these schemes for "reform" was their centralizing tendency—their conception of a function to be discharged by the State and for the State. Private enterprise was taboo. Turgot was incapable of the conception that his economic theories could be carried out independently of government intervention. In Italy physiocrats and industrialists of the school of Beccaria could not imagine that

their theory could be translated into practice unless they themselves took part in government. All alike worked to get themselves promoted to positions of power, and then, having attained the goal of their ambition, thought to give substance to their ideas by embodying them in solemn documents with paragraphs and sections.

But experience showed that the Government lever which they all thought so indispensable was, wherever found, in fact the feeblest of instruments. Joseph II's decision of character appeared—on paper! At the first murmur of public discontent Louis XVI abandoned Necker as he had previously thrown over Turgot.

It was otherwise in Poland; there renewal was reached by a toilsome and sorrowful journey along a path bristling with obstacles and edged with precipices. The aims sought were essentially practical, free from any alloy of doctrinaire idealism; and they lent themselves readily to compromise of every kind. The leaders of the party of reform, the two brothers Czartoryski, the king's uncles, were avowedly pro-Russian. Like many other Poles, both then and since (until quite recently), they were predisposed to regard union with Russia as the only satisfactory way of solving the age-long problem of the relations between the two branches of the Slavonian family; and their Russo-Lithuanian origin would

naturally bias these princes in such an opinion. Moreover, without the indispensable support, or at least the toleration, which they sought to obtain for their programme from the Russian side, they could not see their way to putting it in hand.

Their nephew, the king, had to bear the discredit of an unhappy *début* in the *rôle* which he played before his elevation to the Throne. He possessed no apparent title to the kingship beyond a scheming woman's whim, coupled with her sinister hope of gain from the ruin of his country. Suspect for that very reason among his own people, he won neither credit for his best intentions nor gratitude for his most meritorious performances. His position condemned him to unwise compromises and drove him to unworthy shifts. For the due discharge of the task laid on him not even a conscience less depressed by agitating memories, or a soul more elevated by inspiring motives, or a character more firmly rooted in a sense of duty, could have sufficed. Before succumbing, however, by skilful steering among the reefs and hidden shoals he rendered important services.

The *coup d'état* to which he lent himself in 1764 marked a decisive step in support of the ideas propagated by Leszczynski and Konarski. He retained, however, the *liberum veto* rather than face too violent a conflict with the Opposition,

and still more to avoid one with Catharine's envoy, Kaiserling, the guardian angel of anarchy.

The institution of a Permanent Council in 1775 had all the appearance of a concession to the most anarchical of the several factions which were squabbling for power. The oligarchy *de jure*—to borrow Szujski's expression—now constituted, was nevertheless a government of a kind—probably the only government which the circumstances of the time permitted to be set up; and, bad as it may have been, it was better than none at all.

In all this there is material both for instruction and for hope as to the future. The spirit of reform, which in other countries was pervaded by visionary speculation, assumed among the Poles—the most imaginative of peoples—an intensely practical character. Such was the effect of imperious necessity. But in 1764 the enemy—Austrians, Prussians, and Russians—were knocking at the door: in 1775 they were inside. The hour had struck for a fight for bare existence.

The work of reform opened with a big scheme of educational reorganization, and the establishment of a Committee of Education which started operations by pillaging the property of the Jesuits. Thus the least reputable subjects of the Republic were led to assist a work which they undertook

in the sordid hope of gain, but which was nevertheless to bear good and beneficent fruit.

Whatever good was done at this time was effected by means of compromises, always difficult and often shameful, hindered from within and without—by the vested interests of classes or of persons, by prejudices, by the passions and vices of the majority—all adding their opposition to that of the enemy. The work done was incomplete and imperfect. Neither the national temperament, spoilt by too much liberty, nor the operation of institutions strained by outside intervention, permitted it to amplify or perfect the work. Still, such as they were, the results had their value, and it is notable that they were essentially a product of private initiative.

For this there were several reasons, one of which was the entire absence of that absolutist principle which in Western Europe dominated all enterprises of this kind.

In Poland there was no king to whom another Turgot could say, "Adhering to what is just and right, you can regard yourself, sire, as an absolute legislator, and can count on your good people to execute your orders."

In France the political and the intellectual world constituted two distinct provinces, separated by an impassable barrier. It has been said that political life is reached through the

Church or the magistracy, but never by men of letters. In Poland, as in England, statesmen and writers are mingled together. The author of *La Voix libre du Citoyen* was a king, and he had Konarski for his pupil. Staszic wrote his *Reflections* in the house of Zamoyski the chancellor. At a former period the policy of conquest, pursued by the Poles in Muscovy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was in great part carried out by individual initiative.

In the period 1761–1770 a great Lithuanian noble of German origin, the Count de Tiesenhausen, who became in Poland Tyzenhaus, planned and began to carry out a vast scheme, the object of which was neither more nor less than the economic transformation and industrialization of his entire country. Being insufficiently supported his project miscarried, and he spent a great part of his fortune on the enterprise; but, multiplied during the years 1775 to 1788 in Volhynia and Podolia on a more modest scale, similar experiments, in which various members of the Polish aristocracy—the Czartoryskis, Jablonowskis, Jezierskis, Potockis, Sapiehas—had better success.

Very considerable results were obtained during this time of active reform, and of an awakened national consciousness of the catastrophe that was not only threatening but was already half accomplished. The Polish people made of their

own accord a desperate effort of amendment which deserved better fortune, and certainly did not merit the disdain of which it afterwards became the object.

§ 7

"From intellectual obscurantism, from moral dry-rot, from economic ruin, from internal decay, and from a condition of absolute barbarism, or worse, this nation, true to the fundamental conditions of its historic growth, is raising itself slowly and gradually, but with an ever-increasing momentum. She is bettering the lot of her peasantry by private effort supported by State legislation; she is conferring new prerogatives and privileges on the *bourgeoisie*; she is augmenting agricultural production, encouraging industry, and developing trade, and is well on the way to attaining a commercial balance on the right side. Villages and towns are growing in population and in wealth; public instruction advances by leaps and bounds; literature and the arts are flourishing; the Treasury deficit has been made good from new sources of revenue. A new army is incomparably superior to the old, both in numbers and in equipment; the work of public administration is conducted with greater smoothness and precision; the foundations are being prepared for the formation of a more

efficient government—a stronger State, based on modern principles."

These are the words of Balzer, a conscientious writer, whose picture, however, is charged with colours all too dismal. He was a master of the Cracow school, and had made the tragic period of the national history his special study.

Poland had to strive not only with the defects of her own *régime*—the deadly results of a liberty that had degenerated to licence—but with the concerted action of three Great Powers who spared no pains to bring her efforts to nothing. She was forced to give way. The reforms of the years 1764–1787, the Constitution-building of the period 1788–1791, during the "Four-Year Diet," and the partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795, were but episodes in one drama. But before descending into the tomb, the martyred people, by one supreme effort which called forth all their best qualities of heart and soul, showed that those who were capable of it had given a sure pledge of their ultimate resurrection.

CHAPTER VII

THE CATASTROPHE

§ I

POLAND engaged in the work of reform and France in the work of revolution were not united in their aims as had been ardently desired by a certain historian, who was also at times a poet. It is doubtful whether an alliance would have been materially possible; it was certainly not morally possible. The spirit of the French revolutionaries inspiring the Polish reformers might have given another turn to events; but that was excluded by the very temperament of the people of Kosciuszko, and although she spoke of the "Jacobinière" of Warsaw, Catharine was not deceived.

Others with less perception were impressed by a certain similarity in the speeches and conduct of the leaders in both countries. On October 20, 1788, reunited at Warsaw as a Constituent Assembly, the Diet discussed the levying of a permanent army of 100,000 men. The first section of the projected law having been read out, it was impossible to proceed with the rest, so great was the transport of frantic

enthusiasm, with uninterrupted cries of "Zgoda! Zgoda!" (Agreed!) A deputy essayed to bring forward objections, but his voice was drowned in shouts and continued repetitions of "Zgoda!" from all the benches, whilst the public in the galleries joined in approbation, and the ladies in the boxes waved handkerchiefs and shawls. Are there not details to hand of the convocation at Versailles, August 4, 1789, in which it is said: "The Assembly habitually acted like the people whom they represented—with movements brusque, passionate, and impulsive"? This observation was applied by a contemporary to the French Constituent Assembly.

In November 1789 "a black procession," a group of grave men dressed in French fashion and with sword at their side, defiled through the streets of Warsaw, from the Royal Palace to the residence of the Marshal of the Diet. It was in imitation of the Third Estate in France, the first entrance on the scene of the Polish Third Estate. Convoked by the Mayor of Warsaw, Jean Dekert, 269 delegates, representing 141 towns, claimed by petition equality of political rights.

By its size and importance, this attempt seems to contradict the generally credited statements on the decline of municipal life in Poland at this time. It was very far, indeed, from the splendours which belonged to it in the fifteenth

century. Cracow and Leopol as commercial centres, Kruszwica and Olkusz as industrial towns retained but little of their ancient activity; but other homes of life and economic prosperity began to arise; and, in this respect, Poland of the eighteenth century is at present an unknown quantity even to many Poles themselves.

The 269 petitioners also made use of language which partly agreed in tone with that of those of the West whose example they were emulating. "The moment is come when justice and truth embolden us to speak freely . . . and to make appeal to the rights which belong to us as free citizens . . . men who are conscious of their duty to employ the powers which they claim . . . and which the right of nature and of the most ancient laws . . . have assured to their Estate. . . ."

The petition was drawn up by "the Polish Robespierre" as he was then called—Kollatay—a semi-secularized abbé, and a former vice-chancellor who had strayed into faction-politics, and whose discourse had inspired the Archbishop-Primate of Poland to make the following observation in a loud voice, that "he expected soon to hear the French street lamps proposed as objects of emulation." That Warsaw was a home of Jacobinism was among the inventions by which Catharine thought to influence opinion

as to the real meaning of her intrigues in the Polish capital. The same may be said of her attributing to Poland a share in the revolutionary movement in the Netherlands. Clubs, certainly, existed in Warsaw after the Parisian model. One of them played an important part in the elaboration of the constitutional reform of May 3, 1791. On the eve of the discussion of the project it was read out to a large audience gathered out of the streets into the Radziwill Palace, where the club held its sittings. This proceeding was much in the style of the French Revolution.

But the resemblance stopped there. The beautiful Polish ladies who fluttered fine lace handkerchiefs and cashmere shawls had nothing in common with the *dames de la halle* and the *knitters* who, in Paris, occupied their time in similar demonstrations. So also the spirit and character of Polish reformers was at bottom entirely opposed to that of French revolutionaries.

§ 2

Méhée de la Touche, who had had a varied official employment, having been a diplomat in the service of the Revolution, and later a spy in the service of Napoleon, represented the French revolutionary government at Warsaw from 1790 to 1791, and the ill opinion which he

then acquired of the Poles probably arose from the discovery of their lack of sympathy for the men and things of his own country as they existed at that time. "I do not know," he wrote, "who could have spread the idea in France that the Poles are our friends and partisans of our Revolution. On the contrary, there are few countries where folly and pride are so violently exasperated against us. A few deputies declared for us, but the greater number of them belong to the party of malcontents, and their opinion is always ill received by the rest." The Polish Constitution of May 3 seemed to him, in some of its articles, like a parody of the revolutionary decrees of the National Assembly, and appeared as a whole destined to realize the longing of Innocent XI—"Ah, when shall we have an absolute king in Poland!"

The third of the classes in Poland assumed to a certain degree the tone and manners of the similar class in France; even in raising pretensions to equality. It took care, nevertheless, to mark distances and differences of attitude. "The echo reaches us," so runs the above-mentioned petition, "of the troubles which agitate other countries; but before God, Who knows the secrets of the soul, and before the entire world, we protest our fidelity, and our unalterable respect to H.M. the King, our august master, as well as to the Most Illustrious

Estates of the Republic, and our will to undertake nothing which could in the least disturb internal tranquillity. . . . The slave uses violence to break his fetters, there where the rights of man and of the citizen are stifled by those who dispose of him; but in Poland, the King, the Senate, and the Equestrian Order are all and each convinced that liberty is inherent in man, that the laws are sacred, that the lowest should be raised, the weak strengthened, and that on this foundation alone can the edifice be raised of a free and eternally lasting government." Every word is a sign of demarcation between Poland and the rest of Europe in this phase of their evolution!

In formulating and claiming attention to their demands, the representatives of the lower class, no doubt, had revolutionary France in view, and Madame Dekert, when cavalierly expelled by Prince Sapieha from the box which she occupied at the theatre, dared to remind that brutal personage "not to forget what took place in Paris." But on the whole no one here desired a violent conflict for which there existed no reason, and the representatives of the Equestrian Order responded to the manifesto of the Black Procession "by going in a body to the Hôtel de Ville with the Marshal of the Diet, Malachowski, at their head, to inscribe their aristocratic names on the register of the bourgeois

class, after which they directed their efforts to legalizing the pretensions of the latter by means of a compromise which, in its true Polish inspiration, went directly counter to French revolutionary principles."

On these grounds a Polish replica of the night of August 4 was impossible. Inclined as were most of the members to profess liberal ideas, the nobility of this country of every degree remains passionately attached to its privileges. But at all times it has shown a willingness to share them. Its tendencies were towards equality, but never towards levelling down. Always paradoxical, it aimed at equalization of rights by raising, not by lowering. And it is in this spirit, too, that the solution adopted for the problem of the lower class was conceived.

The idea was partly borrowed from France, but from the France of the *ancien régime*, and with an alteration which transformed it into a Polish conception. Under the stimulus of financial difficulties, the French monarchy sold titles of nobility, together with the offices to which they were attached. Uninfluenced by any fiscal considerations, the Polish Constitution of May 3 decided simply that the exercise of certain employments accessible to the bourgeois class should carry with it the acquisition of all the rights proper to the Equestrian Order.

The Third Estate obtained, moreover, admis-

sion to the Diet with a consultative voice. It did not insist on more. There was no question as in France of *all* or *nothing*. It was something already, and it had to reckon with the character of the reform movement, which, in spite of the influence of the nobiliary *demos*, remained aristocratic in this country from many points of view, and on that account little given to radical measures and commonly inclined to respect tradition.

On both sides also there was an equal repugnance to sharpness of debate, and a general absence of the combative spirit. The unendowed nobility accommodated itself without much difficulty to the article of the Constitution by which it was excluded from any participation in political life. Ideas and violent impulses were not, as in France, aroused and excited by opposition, violent in itself and unscrupulous as to the means used for carrying on the struggle. The fight was carried on without bitterness. For that there were several reasons.

§ 3

It was not at first, properly speaking, a struggle between classes. Between the nobility, including all social conditions above serfdom, and the *bourgeoisie* partially linked with them, political life was concentrated under conditions in which a certain community of ideas and traditions

was supported by a still closer solidarity of interests. The small squire, possessor of some acres of land, called himself, in an expression become proverbial, "the equal of the *woiéwode*." For all that, until he had had a glass too much in the company of this high personage, at the end of some stormy sitting in the Diet, he well knew in his heart that it was not true. He had in his youth *served*—this was the expression used—*at the court*—this was the common term—of the same grandee. He had obeyed his orders, and if he had contravened them he would have been whipped on a carpet, the only concession to which his rank gave him a right. But he sealed his correspondence with the same arms or with other equivalent symbol; however little fortune favoured him, even he had a chance of obtaining a place in the Senate, if only a back place, and anyway he possessed like his betters, and by the same right, at least some dozen serfs, made over to his will by God or by the laws of the Republic. From all this it came about that the one, clad in a sumptuous cloak lined with sable, and the other, in an *opończa* of coarse stuff, could never become irreconcilable adversaries. A noble of the poorer class knew that, together with his more favoured "brothers," he possessed certain prerogatives, to which he clung tenaciously, such as the right to carry a sword, the right to turn aside the carts of the

peasants on the high road, and to take the head of the table in the inn. Since the interests of the two coincided there were no quarrels between them but family ones, easily pacified.

The national temperament is peaceful; not only is it disinclined to violence, but it is lacking in resolution. Both within and without the Diet there were parties, factions, groups in declared hostility to each other—the number was very great. In none were to be found that bitterness and determination which by provoking a decided resistance renders a collision inevitable and excludes all conciliation. The adversaries of the Third Estate began be demanding measures of "severe repression" against "the rebel conspiracy" which had brought together a collection of shopkeepers and innkeepers putting forward unheard-of pretensions." But they confined themselves in the end to refusing any voting power to the aspirants, and thus at once ended the business.

Voting for the remaining Articles of the Constitution presented no more difficulty—even that one which seems to aim at what the partisans of an elective monarchy call "the kernel of their liberty." Circumstances brought about that just at that time opposition from without was absent. Both Austria and Russia were occupied elsewhere. The latter in the direction

of Turkey, the former in that of France. Alone capable of intervention, Prussia acted in a manner worthy of her past and of her future, as the world has since experienced to its cost. Manœuvring to obtain Gdansk and Torun, she expected to receive them at the price of her support. This she offered to the work of reform as against the other neighbouring Powers, and the King Frederick William II himself interpreted this magnanimous proposition in a message of which indeed the Poles could not avail themselves, but by incurring the reproach of impudently abusing it. Its terms were formal but *verbindlich* only and not *bindend*, according to the explanation of a German historian.

Poland then, about to perish as she was, had been acquiring a supremely misleading impression of security—the last ray of the setting sun before the approach of night. She thought herself saved, and about to enter on a new destiny with her internal condition reformed and her external situation made safe. The disillusionment was to be rapid. Before a year had passed, the neighbour on the West showing no sign, the neighbour on the East regained liberty of action; and at once made use of it to forestall the hour when the new Order should begin to bear fruit. To defeat reform she made a weapon of reform itself, rallying the few in the country who had opposed it, and stirring up others. Even so

no great number could be induced to join forces against it. Catharine could only count on the support of fifteen or sixteen—incorrigible brawlers or venal dummies—of any importance in the ranks of the *Targowica*—a confederation under the protection of Russian bayonets organized for defence of "the kernel of liberty." The others were "not worth the trouble of naming." Even in the Diet, out of 500 Senators and Deputies, there were only 90, according to the report of the Russian envoy at Warsaw, Bulhakov, and they "little to be trusted for the most part in the judgement of the Empress."

Possibly the weakness of the reactionary element may have facilitated the ruin of the reforming enterprise and the catastrophe which followed. Had it been stronger, like the counter-revolution in France, it might have evoked a more earnest and ardent spirit among the supporters of the reform programme. The destruction of the work of salvation was as easy as its inauguration had been a result determined by the genius of a people ill-formed and ill-equipped for conflict.

In fact, as soon as the opposition to reform (though coming from without) assumed a character of decision and of violence which was lacking in that which arose within the country itself, a counter-stroke was produced bringing into play new forces and ideas. The reform

movement proceeded from the top, headed by the King and the more prominent members of the aristocracy. Now, the King giving way to the *Targowica*, and the nobles abjuring the flag raised by themselves or letting it fall, the men in the street took it up and renewed the fight in their own way. The movement became different in type and aim. So far it had been in the light of day and followed legal methods. Under the menace of Russian bayonets it was now reduced to working by intrigue, conspiracy, and plots prepared in the dark. It ceased also to be independent. It combined and blended with another current tendency which in its methods included violence and a contempt for scruples. The defenders of constitutional reform began to act under the orders of leaders of insurrection, and together they inevitably imitated Western models, Jacobinism and terrorism. The guillotine did not reach Warsaw, but it was destined to see its street lamps put to the same use as those of Paris.

After a while the example of the West seemed to lose its influence, the timid and ephemeral imitation died down. Deeds of violence were arrested half-way, and fury gradually appeased. Behind Kosciuszko, Kollatay agitated, trying to practise the *rôle* of Robespierre attributed to him. He had turned his back upon his earlier convictions. Even in 1792, commenting on the

events which had happened in France, he had deplored "the ignominious termination of the century." Then, perceiving in the triumph of French arms "the ruin in Europe of monarchy, of nobility, and of the clergy," he considered himself personally threatened. Later, when he found that "what with the friends of Liberty and the supporters of Despotism, Europe contained only two parties," he thought it well to appeal to the Western revolution to support the insurrection which started in Poland towards the end of 1793. But the only man he could find to carry this appeal to Paris was Kosciuszko, of all Poles the least likely to become a terrorist, but who was nevertheless his friend. In the end these two patriots, who never really agreed in opinion, remained closely attached, which proves that the most revolutionary of the two was not, in fact, very extreme.

Insurrection, of which Kosciuszko undertook the command, broke out in the spring of 1794. Riots took place at Warsaw. The mob clamoured for the death of one of the accomplices of the *Targowica*—the Bishop Skarzsewski, who was tried and condemned to capital punishment. Kosciuszko was moved to sign a pardon. Fury of Kollatay who wished to keep up his reputation as terrorist! He protests, and addresses an insulting letter of reproach and blame to the Dictator. Kosciuszko replies by resigning his

post, and the quarrel is brought to an end by an affectionate embrace! The bishop keeps his life, Kosciuszko his command, and quitting Warsaw, where he had spent the last hours under the roof of the make-believe Robespierre (proof of complete reconciliation), he went off to meet the Russians at Maciéjowice (October 10, 1794), where he fought like a lion, but vanquished, wounded, and made prisoner, saved nothing, not even honour: for, into this encounter, where their very existence was at stake, the Poles had not taken the tenth of the number of men they could have provided, weak as they were, and not even all the forces at their immediate disposal.

The army of 100,000 men voted by the Diet had never come into existence. At the time, its construction was probably beyond the resources of the country, and later on the Russians had put obstacles in the way of their employment for this purpose. Moreover, the Diet had airily passed a resolution to the carrying out of which they had given no thought, as often happens in deliberative assemblies. Nevertheless, the old military organization of the country made it possible for the insurrection to find a basis for recruiting which, utilized to the utmost, would have permitted a considerable effort. But, at this decisive hour, the people and the chief chosen by them made clear their limitations: the one

capable of conceiving great things and of beginning to execute them, but lacking the power of continuing to the end; the other, a noble and generous spirit, of crystal purity of intention, but soft as metal unannealed, intrepid only under the hail of bullets. In order to concentrate against the Russians of Fersen, whose strength, being misinformed, he underestimated, the Dictator in his discretionary power should have used all the troops at his disposal with a vigour which he unfortunately did not possess. He engaged in this decisive battle with only 7500 men!

After the battle there still remained 40,000 troops and some 200 guns. The new Commander-in-Chief, Henri Dombrowski, proposed to gather together the whole—army, government, treasure, with the King himself—and, forcing a passage through Prussia, to join hands with the French. Drawing up a detailed plan of the operation, he pointed out the difficulties, guaranteeing the possibility of surmounting them. Entirely accepted at first, even with enthusiasm, by the Government, and formally approved, though with more reserve, by the War Council, the approbation bestowed on this project at first became by degrees more and more hesitating. The King could not make up his mind to leave the capital. The officers lacked the necessary energy. The idea was abandoned. The risks would have been small, and what was still left for Poland to lose

was hardly worth considering. But Danton never found followers in this country. Audacity never appeared there but in thought and speech; and the stuff necessary for the making of Conventionnels was wanting.

On December 30, 1792, the French Convention listened to a Polish orator, Albert Turski, one of the Opposition in the "Four-Year Diet," who had assumed to himself the mission of protesting in Paris against the Constitution of May 3, of making an act of adhesion on the part of his compatriots to the principles of the Revolution, and of fraternizing with the *sans-culottes*. This tendency, which existed under the *ancien régime* of Poland, of an individual to assume to himself without title or qualification of any kind the right to deliver mandates of this nature, is still common to a great many Poles in our own day. The discourse of this self-appointed ambassador, which was severely condemned by Kollatay, agreed with the spirit of the audience to which it was addressed. Yet before starting for Paris he had already published an apology addressed to those whose work he now denounced as subversive of liberty. He there said that he had at first entertained the conviction that it was a matter of indifference to a Pole whether he lived under a native or a foreign monarchy—the yoke being equally insupportable to a free man; but that he had

since become persuaded that "to act against the desire of a whole people was either madness or crime."

This confession may well be considered by many public men of our own time. The man was but an opportunist, and a perfect representative of his caste, soft-hearted, infirm of purpose, something of a hare-brained blunderer, but not a bad man in the main, the prototype of future Polish migrating politicians, bearers all across Europe of revolutionary suggestions, without mandate or capacity for this object, but always ready to change both convictions and language according to circumstances or the impression of the moment. They are all like the great nobleman of their country who, attracted by liberalism, set off to join Garibaldi's bands, but who, after meeting with another wandering seeker after heroic adventures, changed his destination and proceeded instead to Mentana, there to receive a bullet in the ranks of the Pontifical army.

A year and a half later, in July 1794, in a note addressed to the representative of the Polish revolutionary government in Paris (the Bars who translated the *Discours sur les Trois États*), the Committee of Public Safety thought it necessary to protest against the insufficiently revolutionary attitude of the Polish Dictator and his supporters. The populace at Warsaw

having, in the last days of June 1794, carried out a few summary executions in the terrorist style, Kosciuszko had ordered measures of repression and had expressed himself in protestations in the lyric vein: "What has taken place has filled my heart with bitterness. . . . Are these the acts of a people which has taken up arms . . . to recover the rule of liberty founded on order and respect for the law?"

"How is it," replied the Committee of Public Safety, "that declaring himself about to use true revolutionary means for saving Poland, General Kosciuszko acts in reality in a quite contrary manner? He spares the traitor Stanislas-Augustus, he acknowledges him as sovereign! Can it be that he is exercising merciless repression against men who, by putting to death the really guilty, had meant to serve the interests of their country!"

According to certain statements, which, however, are to be received with caution, a club founded at Warsaw under the name of the "Liberty and Equality" had at that moment planned to lay hands on the king and his family, their partisans of all classes, and all the possessors of real estate in Warsaw, as well as on the rich in general and all who did not show themselves disposed blindly to obey the instructions which they received for the safety of the country, and so treat them according to the

principles and proceedings adopted in Paris. Allowing that such plots arose from spontaneous beginnings in the heated atmosphere of the Polish capital, one can find amongst those who figured in the insurrectional drama but one man who could be supposed capable of any part in this programme, Jasinski, sent to Vilna to provoke a rising, but soon recalled by Kosciuszko, and declaring that he could find only traitors in Poland, or individuals without strength of character, of whom he could make nothing.

Nobility and *bourgeoisie*, of these two elements which here virtually constituted the people, the first went as far as it could in ranging itself behind Kosciuszko and his emblem—a peasant's smock, and in being denounced by Bulhakov as "disposed to give liberty to all the serfs." In this atmosphere even Masonry professed monarchical and conservative ideas, and the *journées* of June 1794 evoked unanimous disapproval. But the plebeians themselves never committed excesses, save under the influence of great excitement, followed by quick repentance. As the aristocracy found its perfect expression in Kosciuszko, "the last of the ancient knights and the first citizen of Eastern Europe" according to Michelet, so the Polish democracy found its highest personification in the shoemaker-patriot Kilinski, who, on the morrow of the rioting in which he had tried to prevent bloodshed, recom-

mended the sending into the army of all the more turbulent spirits.

In Cracow the mayor of the town, convicted of a secret understanding with the Russians, at the moment the insurrection broke out overheard some of those under his administration, *bourgeois* of the ancient capital of the Jagellons who seemed to him to have turned into Parisians, speak of the guillotine. But he escaped it by presenting himself, pickaxe in hand, on the ramparts, hastily put in a state of defence. In order to save Poland, perhaps "another Scylla was needed," as the wise and gentle Staszic is believed to have said, but the country was not capable apparently of producing one.

After Maciéjowice, the proposal of Henri Dombrowski was in a measure brought about. According to the opinion of some revolutionaries of our own day, Kosciuszko's remaining soldiers, by making a detour, joined the ranks of the *sans-culottes*, to help in the destruction of feudal Europe. This interpretation of the current of the Polish migration which followed the third partition in 1795, and was carried into Italy, there meeting the French armies and assisting in the formation of the first legions in line with them, is highly disputable. It is historically more correct to recognize in it a phenomenon analogous to that which we witness to-day. Protected by the French authorities, authorized

to wear the national cockade, soon even admitted to equal rights with the French citizens, the Polish emigrants of 1795 naturally conceived strong sympathies, like those of to-day, for the nation to whom they owed this reception. A Society of Polish Patriots, constituted at Venice, began a continuous correspondence with the Committee of Public Safety at first and afterwards with the Directory. It was allowed to maintain a representative accredited to that government and authorized to have one at Constantinople, with whom the French Ambassador was to keep up an understanding respecting Polish affairs. At one time it was even a question of re-establishing at Milan the Polish Constituent Assembly of 1788–92. This project was abandoned, but the remains of the Polish army rallied under the shadow of the French flag. For "the destruction of feudal Europe"? Certainly not. Like the Polish legions of to-day at the front in the West, those of 1795 had no other wish than to fight for the deliverance of their country.

France, to which they appeared to be united so closely, was not that of the Committee of Public Safety, nor that of Bonaparte. They conceived of a France which they idealized, to which they allied an ideal Poland, child of their own imagination, poetically adorned with heroic virtues and free from all defects. Whence on one side or the other, on contact with the reality,

inevitable disenchantments arose, which on the side of the Poles, throughout the existence beyond the grave to which they have so long been condemned, ended in that fixed pessimism into which they have at last been plunged.

In this last phase, turning from the proud illusions in which they once took pleasure, the national poets reproach their ancestors for not having profited better from the benefits of Providence, "which had given them all that it could." This accusation, in which a certain unconscious presumption is evident, seems ill-justified. The Poles are certainly a people happily endowed in many respects, and more fortunate conjunctures than those they have met with in their history would, we may suppose, have permitted them to make better use of the brilliant qualities of which they have given proof even since the catastrophe which put an end to their independence. To their misfortune it has come about that, as in 1794, they have often found themselves up against situations which demanded certain other qualities, in which they are conspicuously lacking, and in particular the combative instinct, the absence of which is a special feature of their historic physiognomy. The motto of Heraclitus, *Polemos mater panton*, is one most repugnant to them.

At the end of the present crisis, the renewal of Europe and of the world, which seems to be

promised, will perhaps bring about, if not the proscription for all time of every form of violence, at least a limit to its operation; thus creating for pacific and feeble nations circumstances more favourable to existence. It remains to show if, and to what extent, the fearful trials which she has endured for one hundred and fifty years have left the Poland of 1794 in a condition to profit by the change. The following pages aim at determining this matter.

CHAPTER VIII

BEYOND THE GRAVE

§ 1

DURING its posthumous existence Poland has been regarded, in the world outside and particularly in France, with very diverse feelings —varying from warmest sympathy to something verging on hostility. From 1795 to 1813 the flags of the two countries were carried side by side, and Polish and French exploits were intermingled. The Polish legions earned popularity by the heroism of their light horse at Somo-Sierra * and the renown of Poniatowski.† After 1831 the remains of the Polish Army received on French soil a welcome whose generous hospitality is still remembered—to the benefit of certain Polish institutions established in Paris. French sentiment associated the Poles with the Alsatians in a common sympathy, which even took on a cash value when the two divided between them the funds which the French Government liberally contributed in aid of refugees.

* In the Sierra de Guadarrama, the mountain boundary between Old and New Castile, forty-five miles north of Madrid. —*Tr.*

† Prince Joseph Poniatowski (1762–1813) created by Napoleon a Marshal of France.—*Tr.*

In 1863, a section of French public opinion passionately took up the cause of the new Polish rising; and in 1867, during the Emperor Alexander II's visit to Paris, the Tsar oppressor was not only shot at by a hare-brained Pole, but was forced to hear the resentful and insulting outcry addressed to him by a Frenchman,* who later attained a high position in the political world.

In the middle of last century, at the Collège de France, Mickiewicz† was associated with Quinet‡ and Michelet§ in an intellectual and moral combination; and Renan, some years before his death in 1892, helped in the transfer of the illustrious Polish poet's remains from the cemetery at Montmorency to the new resting-place provided for them by his compatriots in the Pantheon at Cracow.

After 1871 the part taken by Poles in the Paris Commune‖ brought about a revulsion of feeling which was strengthened later under the influence of the new alliance formed between France and Russia; and poor Poland, for the most part, ceased to share with another victimized people the honour of being "that of which we are always

* Floquet, who called out to the Emperor, "*Vive la Pologne, Monsieur!*"—*Tr.*

† Poet and professor of Slavonic at the Collège de France (1798–1855).—*Tr.*

‡ Poet, philosopher and historian (1803–1875).—*Tr.*

§ History professor at the Collège de France (1798–1874).—*Tr.*

‖ A Pole known as General Wroblenski was a leading Communist commander in Paris in 1871.—*Tr.*

thinking, whilst never speaking of it." * If not deliberately repudiated she was at least consigned to oblivion.

Corresponding to these currents of feeling were the equally diversified estimates formed of the character, the qualities, and the defects of this unfortunate people, who by some were extolled to the skies and by others covered with opprobrium. Already, in 1863, at a meeting at which were pitted against each other the partisans and the opponents of a French intervention in favour of the Polish insurgents, a Parisian humorist declared that it was certainly necessary to set up a new Poland, "so as to be able to turn all the Poles into it."

The fact was that amid all these vicissitudes the nation—which, along with such men as Mickiewicz and Poniatowski, included in its ranks, unfortunately, Berezowskis and Wroblenskis—resembled a mathematical "unknown quantity." The Polish people deserved neither the excessive honour which was at one time accorded it, nor the indignity to which at other moments it was subjected.

She survived the catastrophe which erased her from the list of European States. Even beyond the grave she preserved certain faculties of organic development. A fact so disconcerting

* The allusion is to Alsace-Lorraine during the period 1871–1918, when French statesmen scrupulously avoided provocation to Germany, while biding their time.—*Tr.*

to her enemies has seemed little short of miraculous to many of the Poles themselves. Yet the phenomenon is a matter of ordinary observation in history from the most remote times. The eloquence of the Athenian *agora* had long since been silenced, and the military power of Sparta was nothing but a memory when Hellenic culture illumined the world.

Oddly enough, the partition of Poland did in some degree favour the maintenance of her vital energies. The trio of "co-partitioners" acted for their individual interests, and often in opposition to each other. Under the Treaty of Vienna the three disjointed parts of Poland were formally guaranteed political institutions in harmony with their past. It is common knowledge how this engagement was kept. Russia was the only one who even pretended to honour her pledge by making a grudging attempt to grant a constitutional *régime* at Warsaw, which, however, soon came to an end. In 1866, when Austria and Prussia were fighting each other at Sadowa, and were causing the Polish National Hymn to be played, Russia was at the same moment beginning to carry out a plan for the complete Russification of the Poles whom she ruled.

Thus, while the Polish national organism might seem to achieve possibilities of partial recuperation, the diversity of ills and alternations

of treatment which the country endured aggravated rather than mitigated her sufferings. Further, in the vivisection to which Poland was subjected, the executioners changed their minds repeatedly. Apropos to the territorial rearrangements projected during the Great War by the Central Powers, a "fourth" partition has been spoken of. This is by no means accurate. Poland had passed thrice already under the dissecting-knife between 1773 and 1795, and had had to submit to three other operations—in 1807, 1809, and 1815, when she was again put back on to the operating-table. At a later time, when undoing the work of the Congress of Vienna by the separation of the province of Chelm, the former Russian Government cut once more into the living flesh of the victim. Prohibited henceforth from intercommunication except under a passport system, the members of one family now found themselves divided from each other by the interposition of a new frontier line.

National unity resisted, despite the facility afforded to those who wished to destroy it, by the narrow field in which they were able to concentrate their efforts. Only the *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie* could be counted upon to stand firm for the defence—the latter class being, however, largely made up of elements of German or Jewish origin. Outside of these classes, the

masses of the people constituted, till recently, an element that was at best neutral, but even largely hostile as regards the historic past, which under the system of serfdom represented to them centuries of misery and enslavement.

The question of the emancipation of the serfs had been mooted, as we have seen, since the beginning of the seventeenth century. At the end of the eighteenth all that was best in the nation was prepared to agree to it; Kosciuszko was a pronounced advocate of it. But even for a measure of this beneficent character the dictator was not the man to employ the discretionary powers entrusted to him. The external enemies saw their chance. The liberation of the serfs must be championed by the "co-partitioners," and exploited for all it was worth in their own interests. They engaged in a struggle in which every means, from cajolery to violence, was to be utilized for the attainment of their ends. Austria was the first of the three to essay the milder measures of seduction.

§ 2

The old Polish nobility knew nothing of nobiliary titles. Being a Republic with a King tacked on to it, the State created no titles, and only with extreme reluctance consented to recognize a few of Lithuanian or foreign origin.

Poles of distinction proceeding abroad habitually took the title of Count, just as Germans to whose surname was prefixed the particle *von* were till recently authorized to become "Barons" when once across the frontier, and for as long as they stayed beyond it. But even this usage was not admitted in Poland, the ending *-ski* only constituting the grammatical equivalent of *von*, and carrying no nobiliary significance. At the present day the Poles still use it only when they are abroad, and even those who bear a title avoid in their own country having it inscribed on their visiting-cards.

Nevertheless, the old *noblesse* of Poland were far from dispensing with honorific distinctions. The custom was indeed strangely abused. "A dog without a tail is like a gentleman without a Government post" was the whimsicality which Mickiewicz put into the mouth of one of the characters in his *Messire Thaddée*. The number of honorary offices and places under Government in the Polish Republic developed to extravagant proportions. And although—above all in the final period—the royal court was reduced to a somewhat diminished splendour, the offices of State which depended on it remained to the last extremely numerous. They were arranged in two lists—for Poland and Lithuania respectively; and the principle of decentralization required that corresponding offices should be invented for

the provinces! There were the cupbearers of the Palatinate and there were district masters of the pantry. To these were added the mass of local magistracies, civil or military, from the *woiéwode*, a commandant more nominal than effective of the armed force in his palatinate, to the modest *woïski*, a chief not less honorary, of the militia in his commune. There was also the whole tribe of *starostes*, tenants for life of certain domain property, the *panis bene merentium*. There was something for everybody. Moreover, until they could be personally provided for, the eldest sons of the titular holders of certain offices were designated by a word signifying their parentage: *woiéwodzic*, son of a *woiéwode*, *staroscic*, son of a *staroste*, and so on.

The dissolution of the Polish State caused the disappearance of this Olympus where the vanity of the nobiliary *demos* found its satisfaction, and Austria conceived the idea of offering compensation to some of those who had lost these titles. She announced that families whose members possessed or had possessed titular offices giving access to the Senate—grand officers of the Crown, *woiéwodes*, castellans or bishops, should be eligible to apply for the title of Count. This was a method of obtaining indirectly a recognition, on the part of the candidates, of the work of partition, and of rendering them docile. And the bait was found irresistible. Then Berlin

and also Petersburg followed the example set by Vienna—though with more reserve—and batches of promotions were made to the title of Count.

The high Polish aristocracy in its entirety gave its adhesion, and with very few exceptions all the titles now borne by it are of this origin. The partitioning Powers added the attractions of Court distinctions, including some even of the highest offices; and after Sadowa, Austria created in Galicia quite a new aristocracy, at the same time throwing wide open to her Polish subjects, even outside this province, free access to all careers. In many cases Poles had entrusted to them the task of directing the interior or the exterior policy of the Habsburg monarchy. Simultaneously with these concessions, Galicia, over and above her autonomy, received in the economic order the complementary benefit of favourable treatment, so much so as to render its *régime* burdensome to other parts of the Empire.

And yet, up to the time of Sadowa, Austria did not restrain from the use of severe methods as well; she even excelled in them.

§ 3

We know how, after the repression of the insurrection of 1863, "order reigned at Warsaw." The casemates of Schlüsselburg and the gaols

of Siberia had been filled with the flower of the Polish nobility. At Wilno, Muraviov—descended from a family who under Alexander I had figured at the head of the liberal movement—well deserved his nickname of "Hangman." Not less well remembered are the methods which the Prussian Government employed in Posnania to reduce, according to the humorous expression of Prince von Bülow, "the multiplying of the Polish rabbits." But, so long as she had no need to depend on her Galician subjects to maintain the equilibrium of her internal politics, Austria in her treatment of them surpassed the rest in ferocity.

In 1846 the Marquis Wielopolski—who fifteen years later was to preside over an effort to bring about a Russo-Polish agreement—published his famous "Letter from a Polish Gentleman to Prince Metternich." Its general sense, under cover of polite euphemisms, was to the effect that, choosing the lesser of two evils, the writer accepted for his country the domination of Russia, if only Poland could at this price be delivered and protected from the horror of the Austrian yoke.

During the revolutionary crisis which agitated Europe at this time there were menaces of insurrection in Galicia, and in order to suppress them the Austrian Government adopted the expedient of organizing an armed rising of the

peasantry. The sad heritage of the past gave it every facility for this enterprise, especially in the Eastern part of the province, peopled by Ruthenians; and its success was complete. Entire families of Polish gentlefolks were massacred wholesale, the Austrian authorities paying the butchers handsomely for their work.

As for the other two co-partitioners, even if they shed no blood, they wielded a cruel weapon in expropriation, which the Russian Government employed in various forms. Besides simple confiscation they had recourse to forced sales. The Polish owners on receiving notice to quit were obliged to part with their lands without delay, and were forbidden to transfer possession to any but Russians. The purchasers being, under these conditions, complete masters of the situation, the transaction admirably suited the policy of Russification in two ways: it eliminated the Poles from the soil, and brought them to utter ruin.

That is how one of the biggest fortunes in Russia originated—held in a family whose name is well known, owing to one of its members having taken a prominent part in events still recent. It was amassed by a simple peasant who, after the rising of 1863, bought up, at a miserable price, a large number of rich domains from their expropriated owners.

Alongside of these measures agrarian reform

worked in the interests of the expropriation policy. In the provinces of Poland the allotment of the land to the emancipated peasantry was, as regarded the *noblesse*, in the nature of a measure of war strategy. German colonists coming in as leaseholders were assimilated *en masse* among the Polish peasants, and were given the ownership of the lands they occupied. They served in fact as forerunners of the German armies of invasion sixty years later. The former owners received a merely nominal indemnity for the loss of their property. The indemnity was calculated at less than a quarter of the value of the lands taken, and was paid in 3 per cent. bonds, of which the market price stood at about 60. Even that part of their landed property which they were allowed to keep they were not allowed to dispose of as they chose. It remained burdened, to the profit of the peasants, with a whole system of easements—a complete obstacle to the proper cultivation of the soil, and also a source of disputes which government agents were employed to stir up and to embitter.

Ultimately the system was completed by the setting up of a communal organization which made over the local administration nominally to the peasants alone, to the exclusion of the former lords of the soil, now become outlaws on their own land. In reality the administration was handed over to the discretion of other

government agents, who were enjoined to see to it that nothing should survive of the patriarchal relations formerly subsisting. The *noblesse* in the country districts were even forbidden to maintain any longer in the villages either schools or dispensaries or crèches.

After the insurrection of 1863 nothing was left of the former Polish school organization. The High School at Warsaw, which provided a superior education, had to yield to a Russian University staffed by teachers who, with a few exceptions, were recommended for appointment by their capacity to serve the Russification policy. The gymnasiums, Russified in like fashion, were given professors who lacked any proper qualification, who for the most part had had no training for the work of teaching, and who sometimes were themselves entirely uneducated.

Occasionally, in the case of some of the teaching chairs, there was a double professorship, Polish assistant professors being appointed at half the salaries enjoyed by those of alien origin. In the villages, for lack of a qualified staff of any kind, and also for want of funds, the Polish schools, formerly supported almost wholly at the cost of the great nobles, were simply suppressed without anything to take their place. The Russifying policy contented itself with having snapped one more link be-

tween the obstinately patriotic *noblesse* and the peasant.

The Church, too, which formed another bond between classes, was duly dealt with. The clergy had to undergo a drastic "Pride's Purge," and were firmly kept under. One curé could not pay a visit to another in a neighbouring parish without a special permit and a safe-conduct. In the provinces with a Ruthenian population the Græco-Latin Uniate Churches * served as a common meeting-ground in three ways—first, between the adherents of the two Rites; second, between the two branches of the Slavonic family; and thirdly, between two social strata. Of course, then, the Church became the object of violent attacks. At the very foot of a Uniate altar Russian soldiers compelled the peasants, forcing open their mouths with the point of the bayonet, to receive Communion from the Greek Orthodox.

Yet nowhere, save in Galicia, were the results obtained in proportion to the amount of force, of ingenuity, and of barbarity employed. The attempt to colonize Posnania with Germans has not repaid its expenses—setting aside the question of justice and humanity. The Prussian Government laid out half a billion, and obtained very

* Uniate Churches in the East are separated from the Orthodox Greeks, and in communion with the Roman See, but use their own forms of public worship in the vernacular, and retain certain other customs peculiar to themselves.

little for their money. The lands taken from the Poles by expropriation had, in order to find some one willing to farm them, to be made over to German colonists. But these new owners paid the government considerably less than the government had paid to the original owners whom it expropriated. The German purchasers, anxious to resell the land as quickly as possible at a profit, parted with it—usually to the Poles—at the price originally paid by government. The enterprise could not escape from this vicious circle, while it inflicted on the Polish population much loss and hardship. Austria, on the other hand, succeeded much better.

§ 4

As her reward for having renounced the use of force, she gained by this new experiment the moral conquest of at least a certain number of her Poles. Galicia, apparently, escaped Germanization. As it retained the elements of Polish culture, the object of pitiless repression in other parts of the country, it could offer shelter for it and a common centre which radiated influence over the whole of Poland. German influence did penetrate it, as we have seen, and even in some respects prevailed; but the language of Skarga and of Mickiewicz could at least be freely spoken and taught at the foot of the

Carpathians, at the very time when the Posnanian children were being whipped till the blood ran for a prayer recited in the mother-tongue, and that the inhabitants of Warsaw were reading inscriptions in the interior of public edifices, forbidding them to speak Polish. At the same time the Galician nobility, after having suffered odious treatment, were not only relieved from it, but partly recovered the political and social position which they had enjoyed in ancient Poland.

On this basis, a sort of silent compact was concluded, though it is not possible to determine the motives, the national and individual interests which brought the privileged classes into the agreement. For one reason or another they did support it, and on this account it was they who largely paid the price of the advantages obtained. Under their dominant influence, the Poles of Galicia have for nearly fifty years served *per fas et nefas* the political aims of Austria, sometimes even to the detriment of the most vital interests of their nationality or race. Under the hands of their Austrian drivers, they accepted the function of tame elephants for inveigling and coercing their fellow-countrymen. They have played the game of the Austro-Hungarian government against the other Slavs of the Empire. They applauded the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and during the present war their fidelity

under every strain cannot be denied. The admission of extenuating circumstances is due to them for this error. Its consequences have not been the less prejudicial to the Polish people. Even for the sham political organization set up recently by the Central Powers at Warsaw (a *comédie bouffe* mingled with tragic drama), the Galician aristocracy, if they did not furnish the directing power, which came from Berlin and Vienna, were at least models of correct deportment as subordinates. By this *mise en scène* none but the most foolish, even outside the country, were deceived. The Imperialists were not able to find any one of real authority outside Galicia to make even a decorative appearance on the stage. If, for instance, a Prince Janus Radziwill or a Count Etienne Przezdziecki, young men without the least political education, without other reputation than that of amiable dancers, as without any following, were persuaded to appear in a *rôle* for which their absolute inexperience was their only excuse, it was because the one, a cadet of a family without fortune, is married to a rich Galician, Mlle. Wodzicka, and the other is brother to a Countess Szapary, widow of a Hungarian nobleman and a court lady in Vienna. Moreover—and this detail will suffice to prove the embarrassment which led to the choice of these two—the supposed representatives of Poland restored to independence under the ægis

of Austria and Germany belong both of them by birth to Lithuania, which province these same Powers intended to erect simultaneously into an independent State, to the detriment of its union with Poland for five hundred years. Obtaining a part in the government of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, political hegemony in their province, and liberty to further the national interests as they understood them—for all these substantial advantages the Polish aristocracy parted with their independence and dignity. It is due to different circumstances that the other classes in Poland escaped all temptation to make a similar bargain. Even when accepting certain small favours, sometimes the way of escape from loss of self-respect, or in exchanging amenities, often obligatory, these did not sell themselves for a mess of pottage.

Although it is intended that this study of Poland should be free from all personalities, there are some names which ought to be mentioned as those of men who are somewhat exposed to being misunderstood. Besides, they belong to history.

In the Chamber of Prussian Lords, a certain Prince Drucki-Lubecki recently made profession of loyalty to Germany He also comes from Lithuania, and he has taken care to run aground in a safe port, to suit his personal convenience, after a long and somewhat inglorious series of

adventures. By family tradition he was strongly attached to Russian interests. Before becoming Minister of Finance in the government of the kingdom of Poland, a result of the stipulations of the Congress of Vienna, his grandfather had figured in the councils of Alexander I. After having dissipated in early youth his share of a rich inheritance, the grandson lived by various expedients, seeking fortune without success, even across the Atlantic, until after he was fifty, when he offered his princely title *registered in Bavaria* to the daughter of a German industrial multimillionaire with a large dowry. This was a very exceptional example of a Lithuanian separating from Poland and becoming Bavarian, one in no sense representative of his people. It is not certain in any case that this is the definite end to his career.

Some years before the war, another Pole represented Germany as ambassador in Paris. Being the bearer of a princely title of recent creation and of a name altered by Germanizing, being besides married to a German lady, he seems to offer a typical instance of Germanization among the petty Posnanian nobility. Just before he left Paris, however, he departed from the rules and conventions of his office by freely expressing his disapproval of the political practices in Poland by the government which he served. Recalled rather suddenly and made to

retire, he has since lived in deep disgrace and there was a rumour of his arrest.

His case had a still more illustrious precedent in Russia, in the person of the intimate friend and favourite adviser of Alexander I—Prince Adam Czartoryski, who, after having been Minister of Foreign Affairs in the service of the Tsar, became head of an insurrectionary government in Warsaw, and died an exile in Paris, with a poor remnant of the immense fortune which he lost by confiscation. In Posnania M. Radolinski, become Prince Radolin, followed in the footsteps of another compatriot, Koscielski, who was known for some time as "the Polish Admiral" because of the zeal with which when member of the Reichstag he supported the naval programme of the German Government. The late Koscielski thought thus to serve a cause in which a certain sovereign, past master in the art of facile enthusiasms, himself manifested the liveliest interest. In the beautiful country house where he arrived to be the guest of this Polish gentleman, William II left a portrait under which he inscribed in the grandiloquent but equivocal style which he affects, certain flattering promises, *verbindlich* but not *bindend.*

The author, in pursuit of an inquiry which he had to make, visited this part of Poland some ten years ago, and saw the inscription. But the beautiful residence was not then expecting an

Imperial visitor. Its proprietor no longer resided there, only paying an occasional flying visit by stealth and, even when with his wife, avoiding the occupation of their usual apartments. The park was not kept up and the grass grew on the steps before the house. Like Prince Radolin, the "Polish Admiral" had passed into the revolutionary camp and, threatened with confiscation, his country house was meanwhile counted as an urban residence, and was taxed accordingly.

The co-partitioning governments may be said, on the whole, to have had no better success with the Polish *bourgeoisie*.

§ 5

German immigrants into Poland gave proofs of an unshakeable attachment to the country of their adoption. Although they were not gathered up into compact groups, as was the case before the war at Lodz, or in certain agricultural colonies, cunningly placed in Polish territory along strategic lines; when planted down in the midst of Slav surroundings these settlers commonly became assimilated to their surroundings with great rapidity and with lasting result. For the last century Polonized Germans have contributed largely to the list of martyrs to Polish patriotism.

The Israelitish element incorporated in the

Polish *bourgeoisie* has shown itself much less consistent. More plastic and adaptable it seemed accessible to every influence, the strongest prevailing over the rest. In a certain suburb of Wilno there lived two Jewish families next door to each other in the middle of the last century. They were close friends and probably related to each other. Twenty years apart, the one family produced a brilliant writer, the other a talented artist, both well known and appreciated in Paris, where the one collaborated on the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and the other frequently exhibited at the Salon. The first became a zealous Catholic and an ardent Polish patriot, the other adopted Russian Orthodoxy and bore the title of Sculptor to the Imperial Court of St. Petersburg. The careers of Klaczko and Antokolski, so alike at the beginning and so different in their development, serve to illustrate the progress by political Russification in the Lithuanian portion of ancient Poland, where the Muraviovs had had the easiest task because of the Ruthenian character of the local population. The Jewish element as a rule lent itself readily to their enterprises. Now this is found throughout Polish territory in great numbers, and in the population of the towns often forms the majority.

In the country districts, as in the towns, the masses, with one exception, remained in a

condition of complete neutrality: the peasants because of the inferiority of their intellectual development, and the workmen because of their connexion with socialism and internationalism. Though as a rule they belonged to these classes, the clergy, being of superior education, were more awake to the national ideal. But their influence, above all in Russian Poland, was neutralized by a rigorous surveillance, and reduced to very narrow limits.

The exception is to be found in Posnania. The Germans by their rule in this province proved once more their ignorance of the most elementary laws of psychology. They imagined that by passing the Polish peasants through the German schools and bringing them under the influence of the *Kulturkampf*, they could Germanize them. In fact *they Polonized them.* By education their minds were open to ideas, and their hearts to feelings of which they had not before been conscious, and the Polish priests, being attacked in their faith and worship, instinctively defended them on the national soil where they had but little difficulty in influencing their flocks.

The Hakatists of the Eastern borders of the Empire and their Berlin supporters could not understand this.

On the occasion of another ramble in the Posnanian country, undertaken long ago, the

author was kept for several weeks on the banks of the river Spree and was brought casually into contact with official circles. Long and complicated formalities forbade access to certain Prussian State archives, and the Chancellor spontaneously offered to remove this obstacle. The successor to Bismarck was then Prince Hohenlohe, whom the author had known in Paris. Rather a formalist himself, "Uncle Clovis" prided himself on being something of a *grand seigneur* in his personal relations. Allied to the Radziwills by marriage, he also liked to exhibit his Polish connexion. If the shade of the Iron Chancellor ever haunted the palace in the Wilhelmstrasse, he must have been annoyed to find in the place of honour, a portrait of Queen Barbe Radziwill, wife of the last Jagellon.

As he was received most courteously, the author made no mystery of his projected excursion along the banks of the Warta and its object, and he was surprised by having the Archbishop of Posen pointed out to him as the man most qualified to give him an exact idea of the condition of the country. Polish opinion did not attribute to Mgr. Stablewski any such sentiments as to justify the credit accorded him by the German authorities, and the author soon had proof of their mistake. Some weeks later, when dining with the Archbishop in company with numerous Posnanians of note, he found himself

in an atmosphere of ardent patriotism and of deep, though restrained, anger against German tyranny. He took cognizance of a certain popular journal, which counted forty thousand Polish peasants among its subscribers. Its spirit was thus described by Mgr. Stablewski, who superintended its editing :

" As head of the diocese, and in the interests of religion of which I am the guardian, I have to try as much as possible to conciliate the authorities on which unhappily they depend ; but as shepherd I owe it to my flock to protect it from the German wolf which seeks to corrupt the soul, the more easily to devour the body."

One could not but feel astonishment that during the present war this flock has not manifested its legitimate hatred and its natural longing for freedom in some way more apparent. After *Bartek the Conqueror* of 1871, the sorrowful epic set forth by Sienkiewicz, how many of his countrymen have, alas, fallen before the bullets during the last four years, facing the French flag, beside which the Polish flag was also unfurled ! With the means at their disposal, the extreme rigidity of German militarism partly explains this phenomenon, which appears characteristic of all Slav elements reduced to equal helplessness under the domination of the Central Powers. The same may be said even of the Alsace-Lorrainers. It needed altogether ex-

ceptional circumstances to make it possible that in the rooting up of the Russian Empire and under cover of the resulting tempest, contingents of Czecho-Slovaks should escape from this oppression. But the absence of the combative spirit has also been one cause of the attitude generally taken by their racial brethren. The Posnanian peasant, who had himself killed in France under the command of the Boches, died none the less hating them with all his heart and giving his last thought to the country which they themselves had unwittingly taught him to love. And seen from this point of view, Poland's life after death had been to the dismembered country a positive advantage. The basis of conscious nationality had become larger and more solid, even while being kept under restraint. However painful it may be for them, it is to the interest of the Poles that the facts should be brought to light, as the reason and excuse for certain failings. Thwarted in her growth by continual coercion, Poland is still in growing-pain and is still *becoming*; but the example of Posnania is reassuring in regard to future possibilities which the present crisis seems to be bringing near.

§ 6

To affirm that Poland has in any way whatever *gained* by being cut to pieces and reduced to slavery needs a supercilious audacity as to facts,

and an ironical disdain with respect to men, which was the habit of mind of Prince Talleyrand and to which he partly owed his success. Positions acquired, and possibilities of development—dismemberment and subjection brought about to the vanquished of 1794 the loss of these, and much else, of which to-day it would be rash in her to count on the complete recovery. But having survived the catastrophe and preserved the elements of vitality, it is but natural that she should nevertheless have made some progress. The catastrophe coincided historically, as has been shown, with the beginning of a certain material and moral uplifting, in which, by adapting herself to modified conditions of existence, she found new resources.

The growing importance of the Russian market brought her a certain compensation as intermediary between West and East, a position to which she owed her past splendour, and which she now partially recovered. The intense cultivation of her soil, and excavation of her subsoil, leading to the discovery of unsuspected wealth, furnished her with the means for this renewed activity, but the loss of her independence hindered and limited its use. Her exterior commerce, for instance, was weighed down with heavy exactions. The treaties of partition had assigned to Prussia the outlets to the sea of her river system, of which the greater part was

included in the Russian sphere. Of this the Prussian Government took advantage by deducting an exorbitant duty on exportations by this means. A project for joining up the Vistula and the Niemen to Russian ports on the Baltic by means of canals was thought of, and even put into execution, but on Prussia's denouncing it as contrary to her interests, the enterprise was abandoned.

Alongside of Lodz, a hamlet transformed during the last fifty years into one of the most important manufacturing cities in Europe, Warsaw has become a great commercial centre with a population grown in the same space of time to five times its former size, attaining a million before the war. In Posnania and Galicia less favourable geographical conditions combined with the economic exclusiveness of the two German governments have prevented a similar expansion of Polish industry and commerce. But in the course of the last few years the exploitation of the copious wells of petrol in Galicia, and also the projected working of a coal-field connected, like that in the Pietrekow region of Russian Poland, with the Silesian system, have and may become the source of considerable wealth. In Posnania, on the other hand, favoured by an economic and administrative organization of the first order, agriculture has attained the highest degree of perfection.

Materially, seen from this point of view, this country has become an *Eldorado*, contrasting in a salient manner with the relative barbarism and distress of the neighbouring district of Poland under Russian domination. But the Prussian government has succeeded in making this latter *morally* an object of envy to her oppressed Poles.

The general balance-sheet of this growth of prosperity, which has taken place since the partition, throughout the whole extent of the ancient republic, has been drawn up at different times. Certain facts which had been admitted concerning it are to-day unfortunately made doubtful by recent events, which necessitate in regard to them a note of interrogation. Ravaged by the prolonged struggle of belligerents on its territory, then systematically exploited by the conquerors of the moment, it is not yet known what has been retained of the riches this country possessed at the moment when hostilities commenced. In any case its intellectual and moral resources, which it has preserved and augmented throughout its time of trial, remain. These will help in repairing the material ruin which the last war has added to its other misfortunes.

§ 7

To what level of culture Poland could have risen during the last century and a half, if it had

remained united and free, none could conjecture. Dismemberment and subjection have necessarily interfered with its progress, but have not entirely prevented it. The distinction of certain of its poets and novelists, from Mickiewicz to Sienkiewicz, have made this period of disintegration and oppression that which produced the finest Polish literature, and for the first time since Copernicus the fame of Polish writers was carried beyond the limits of the country. To some the work of the author of *Quo Vadis?* seemed overcharged; such critics, especially those outside Poland, have generally ignored the most distinctive part of his art, in which nothing can be found of the alleged imitation of Cardinal Wiseman and of the elder Dumas. To the liveness of this gifted story-teller very many Polish readers prefer the incoherent but powerful mysticism of Wyspianski, the poet-painter of Cracow, or the keen realism of Sieroszewski. But in *Par le Fer et par le Feu* they looked for something quite other than mere entertainment, and failed to recognize in it the crude imagery of a popular novel. They enjoyed above all the appeal to their past history adorned with glories, in great part fictitious, but the more appreciated because consolatory and comforting. The help which they there found towards bearing the sufferings and humiliations of the present hour was incalculable, and is in itself an evidence of vitality.

To sum up, although in an inferior style, Sienkiewicz was a great artist.

The artistic talent of the Polish people cannot be doubted, although up to the present it has not produced its full measure. In music, for example, the half-French genius of Chopin remains an isolated phenomenon, in the midst of an over-production of pianists. Circumstances have been singularly opposed to the vocation of musician in Poland. The last director of the Conservatoire of Music in Warsaw was exiled from that city in our own day, and finished his career at Paris in the orchestra of the Opera, and one Polish composer of talent was before the war directing the Conservatoire at New York.

There is apparently better reason for disputing the scientific aptitude of a nation which, since the time of Copernicus and Witelo, has never shone in this domain. The illustrious demonstrator of the double movement of the planets on their axis and in their orbits was not only an astronomer of genius. He showed himself in philosophy a profound and original thinker, preaching on the threshold of the sixteenth century the necessity of seeking the truth everywhere and proclaiming it always without regard to social convention or theological discipline. Bringing to light the unity of law in the solar system, he laid the foundation of the method of investigation by analogy, the

application of which has been immeasurable, and he introduced into mathematics the notion of the infinite.

One must remember that he could only have developed such teaching under a tolerant government, of which at that time there was then no other example in Europe.

The work of Witelo and his very existence are all but unknown to the public, even in Poland, in spite of the fact that this savant gathered from study and experiment the first idea of optics —in the thirteenth century!—and that in his history of mathematics Montucla appears to have wrongly accused him of plagiarizing from the Arabia physician Alkazen, of the eleventh century. Poland then has a right to claim that she has assisted in the advancement of science. But her pioneers lived long ago, and they have had no successors. Copernicus died in 1543. The decline of the Cracow University, in the second half of the fifteenth century, was followed in Poland by an interval of general decadence, and, until recent times this country no longer possessed a scientific centre. At the period of the dismemberment Wilno appeared for some time to be about to assume this position, and one of its professors—André Sniadecki, left a *Theory of Organic Beings* in two volumes, which medical students could even to-day study with profit, according to the judgement of a certain

Polish member of the Pasteur Institute in Paris. This founder of the study of chemistry in Poland was not known outside his own country, and even there his teaching did not bring forth the hoped-for fruit, because the University of Wilno soon ceased to exist.

In our own day the torch was rekindled at Cracow. The University of this town rose again from its ruins at the same time as another, founded in 1784 at Lemberg; and an Academy of Science was added to it in 1873. The whole country took deep interest in this revival, although the results up to now have been mediocre. The cause of this is partly to be found in the wrong direction given to its scientific work. In the need which the Poles instinctively felt of remaining in close touch with their past —the precious deposit of memories by contact with which they gain new strength—they were inclined to concentrate interest and attention on historical research. The Cracovian Academy of Science made this its chief concern, and, as its teaching has been perverted in the manner already described, the results do not appear to great advantage in the general summing up of the situation, of which the most active elements have been indicated above.

The prospect is nevertheless encouraging, if it does not justify views too optimistic. Whatever indulgence is due to a national self-esteem

so sorely tried, it would be dangerous to offer illusory consolations. More than others who have in recent times recovered their independence, the Polish people have the power to show themselves worthy of the benefit, on condition of adjusting their ambitions to the resources at their disposal, without attempting prematurely to enlarge their horizon. As those who are interesting themselves in the future destiny of Poland will assuredly do, the Poles themselves, in reckoning up their assets, must also record their liabilities in estimating the heavy and sorrowful heritage of their past.

§ 8

The effect should be pointed out of the current of emigration which from 1794 has flowed continually in a stream of the best blood of the unhappy nation. In France alone the numerous descendants of the emigrants of 1831 have made an honourable place for themselves in the country of their adoption, and Babinski, Dybowski, Klobukowski, and Sienkiewicz have in our own day ranked there among its best servants. Whilst keeping in pious remembrance the country of their origin, they for the most part no longer speak its language.

But the chief part of the current has crossed the Atlantic. The largest religious edifice in

the United States belongs to the Polish colony at Chicago, whose members number more than 300,000, whilst the Polish population of the two Americas is estimated at more than four millions. Raised on the soil of France, the flag of national independence has just recalled to Europe thousands of those expatriated. But how many are destined never to revisit the land which gave them or their parents birth!

How many, too, have been scattered across the immense tracts of Russia, where they have often lost, if not the consciousness of their origin at least the manners and language characteristic thereof. It happened recently to the author to see a French and a Polish soldier on leave carrying on a friendly conversation in Russian, the only language spoken by the Pole, his French comrade having learnt it in Moscow, where his parents were living before the war. But other Poles coming on the scene could take no part in the conversation; they had arrived from America and could only speak English.

The Jewish race alone affords an instance of so large an exodus of a population from its own land, and theirs was only partly brought about by similar reasons. The causes of the phenomenon in Poland were very many. About twenty years ago, at a scientific congress in a neutral country, one of the Delbrücks who figured in German politics in our time—the editor of the *Preus-*

sische Jahrbücher—said to the author that he disapproved of the Prussian system of government in Posnania, not because of its cruelty, but because of its inefficiency. And he added, partly in jest, that he could see no other solution to the problem of governing this province than that Germany should employ the whole of her commercial fleet and of her navy in deporting all her Polish subjects *en bloc* to one of her African colonies.

This scornful sally, the delicacy of which can be appreciated, was in fact partially carried out. The maritime companies of Germany made fortunes by the embarkation of hundreds of thousands of Polish families for far destinations, for whom the fate which they endured under German or Russian rule was equivalent to a decree of compulsory deportation. To many, besides, voluntary exile was only one of the horns of a dilemma — the other being imprisonment or death.

After the suppression of Polish schools, repugnance to German or Russian schools was another motive for escaping to a foreign land. In the college of St. Clement at Metz, Marshal Foch was educated before 1870. About forty Poles were amongst his companions. One of them remained in France. It is he who writes these lines. Whilst remaining profoundly attached to his native land, he could never bring himself to

return and make his home there, and he gave this reason to some Russian friends who could well understand it; he told them that under the rule there obtaining, he feared he should become an anarchist.

However legitimate was the desire of Polish parents to give their children a better education than that which they could get at home, the expedient of sending them abroad was not quite wise. It had the effect of making them unfit for the conditions of existence which they found on returning to their homes, where, nevertheless, it was their duty to remain and take up the struggle. In later times this has become better understood. Towards the middle of last century, without any necessity, but simply to escape from molestation impatiently borne, to breathe in freer air, or to move in the midst of a higher level of culture, a number of the Polish aristocracy decided to form permanent establishments in some foreign land. They mostly preferred France, and in the neighbourhood of the Hôtel Lambert in Paris, the abode of illustrious non-voluntary exiles, one Polish family alone possessed four sumptuous residences. But the movement came to an end and one in an opposite direction set in. The bearers of names intimately associated with the history of the country felt that honour compelled them to return to the rank of combatants. But elsewhere the tide continued to flow. Accord-

ing to statistics, which call for verification, the Polish population before the war was estimated at about 25,000,000. But these figures include contingents scattered throughout the entire world, and hardly represent the disposable effective for the restoration of the Polish State. This, moreover, will besides depend essentially on the extension given in the reconstruction project to those "historic limits" of which those who speak of them hardly ever conceive in the same way, and in the "cadre" of which, to employ a formula recently introduced into the official language of the Entente, rival ambitions have clashed for centuries and divers ethnic elements are mingled and confused, in a manner wellnigh inextricable. But there is reason to hope that in the Europe of to-morrow where Poland will regain her place, the right of nations to live will not be measured by size, and in view of the future promised them, and the tasks which await them, the Poles have to reckon with greater difficulties than that of numbers.

§ 9

National unity offered a sturdy resistance. But an ordeal prolonged for a century and a half was bound at length to produce a disintegrating effect. The several parts had been cut off from the community and subjected to influences and promiscuous experiences of a diverse nature.

Though united by a common aim, the Poles of the three distinct divisions of Poland, not to speak of the American colony, could not to-day have quite the same conception of their ideal of unity, nor equal aptitude in following on to its realization.

From one frontier to the other, the differentiation of ideas, of character, of faculties, has brought about an equilibrium of values in which the work of integration will find a *point d'appui*. The Poles of Posnania have contracted in the Prussian schools, together with some defects, qualities of order, discipline, and reflection which in the reconstituted community will be of great importance and value.

On the other hand, kept aloof from political life, save for a representation in Parliament that was nominal rather than real, excluded even in the economic order from any participation in the great current of affairs when the prospects of Germany before the war took so high a flight, they appear somewhat provincialized, and little fitted to adapt themselves suddenly to State life in a more extended sphere.

From this point of view their brothers of Russian Poland are better qualified. Beyond the fact that from 1807 to 1831 they had the experience of a considerable autonomy, they were, within the limits of the ten provinces composing the so-called "Congressist" kingdom of

Poland, initiated into the great industries, and throughout the extent of the Russian Empire they had access to all great enterprises; they were much sought after as engineers, heads of technical departments, or consulting lawyers. They were tolerated even in the central administration, on condition that they were content with subordinate posts, and in the army or in diplomacy they often attained high rank without renouncing their nationality. They will place at the service of the future Polish State a far more experienced body of men. Their value, unfortunately, will be rather compromised by faults contracted by contact with Russian life as it was fashioned by the old *régime*. Under the liberal rule inaugurated in Galicia after Sadowa, the Poles of this province benefited by all kinds of experience, but, alas, in a detestable school. Although enjoying a nearly free self-government for close upon half a century, this corner of Polish territory remained in many respects the most backward, as it was also the poorest; above all, the Poles there learnt a debased type of political practice. Political education remains, in a general way, the weak side of this nation.

§ 10

Misfortune is said to be a good instructor, and in this school the Poles have doubtless profited. They have not rid themselves of all their faults, chiefly because they were determined to remain Polish, which was their first duty as well as their best interest. Their minds have nevertheless grown wiser, and their characters more hardy. But they have also contracted some new faults. Slavery, which depresses and depraves, is a bad teacher.

Outside Galicia, and partly within this province, the political education of the last few Polish generations has been carried on within secret societies, another most unhealthy school. Poles have been persuaded into a perversion of ideas and sentiments which affected even Mickiewicz himself when he popularized the hero of one of his poems, a Lithuanian who, under the borrowed name of Konrad Wallenrod, entered the service of the Teutonic Order, in order to betray and bring it to disaster. *Wallenrodism* has since been repudiated, but under its influence the Poles have developed with still more exaggeration that spirit of individualism the excess of which weighed down their past so heavily, and which they should modify in the future in order to escape incoherent ideas and the abuse of personal initiative.

There is a saying that whenever *two* Poles

take part in a political debate, there are always at least *three* opinions in conflict. And the facility with which many of them assume to be the official representatives of collective interests is only equalled by that with which their compatriots allow themselves thus to be imposed upon. Although public opinion in their country owes much of its inconsistency to this fact, they are none the less always impressed by the least authorized manifestations, and the gallery in which shawls and handkerchiefs are fluttered by white hands exerts an influence over them which they are incapable of resisting. The history of Polish insurrections from 1794 to 1863 offers in this respect instructive indications.

Their frequency, and the small encouragement which suffices to produce them, seem at first sight to contradict the observation made above on the want of combative spirit in the people, who thus play such hazardous games with destiny. One must look closer. The signal for the rising of 1830 was given by some pupils at a military school, and the *gallery* induced a man of such great experience and high intellect as Prince Adam Czartoryski to undertake the command of it—at least nominally. The insurrectionary government of 1863 was anonymous while it lasted. If published, the names of those who composed it would have raised a universal smile.

The periodicity and adventurous character of these armed attempts appear to have some relation to the hereditary capacity for illusion which acquired an abnormal growth in the subterranean ways of political conspiracy. In 1830 and 1863, as in 1794, they looked for imaginary succour, which they felt sure of obtaining. On several occasions they expected it from Prussia! No shot could be fired in Europe but they were persuaded that some one was fighting for them, and many were inclined to set fire to the four corners of the earth, in the conviction that, like a new Phœnix, a free and greater Poland would arise from the ashes of the fires they had kindled. In these last years, having come to saner ideas through sad experience, they have generally inclined to an activity less inspired but more constructive, unhappily, however, still paralysed by habits of incoherence and of disunion.

There is no need to examine here the political tendencies of infinite shades of difference, the ever-multiplying parties, the antagonisms of principle and aim which the rapid progress of events would deprive of any but a retrospective value. The breath of liberty is stirring everywhere, and blowing down barriers. Already in the National Committee now sitting at Paris and recognized by the Allies, a fusion between parties seems imminent.

Meanwhile, under the elementary discipline they entail, the multiplicity of parties has in a measure begun to evolve a spirit of organization. The Poles have never been entirely without this. At the time of the final catastrophe they were occupied in reorganizing their entire existence, political, social, and economical. In Posnania Polish co-operative societies, and credit banks, destined to fight expropriation, were models for imitation. One is tempted to attribute their merit to German schooling ; but in Russian Poland, the few organizations of this kind permitted by the Government of the Tsar since 1863 have mostly been carried on with the same correctness, and one has even filled a considerable place in the life of the nation.

Deprived of any direct and normal contact with political life, it was inevitable that those people for whom politics had been at least half of their existence should somehow seek to immerse themselves again in their favourite element.

The *Crédit Foncier* of the kingdom of Poland, founded on the French model in the middle of last century, permitted the election by the borrowers not only of the Council of Administration, as in Rumania, but also of the administrative body ; and it was inevitable that under this condition, periodically renewed, the elections should assume a political character,

lending the institution the semblance of a national character. The establishment none the less prospered, giving, in spite of some errors and failures, great satisfaction to its clientele.

Paradoxical as it was in the time of its independence, the existence of Poland has been, under servile rule, full of anomalies of every kind followed by hurtful consequences. The tendency to introduce politics into everything is one, though not the most fatal. The *régime* resulting from partition has not been only more or less oppressive according to time and place; it has been uniformly humiliating and debasing.

§ II

In itself the moral level of the co-partitionist governments was not of the highest. Recent events have shown that. They necessarily lowered it still more by a policy of alternate violence and corruption, the instruments of which could not themselves have been of a very elevated quality. In Posnania the Government could only obtain the services of men of low type, who became the more corrupted by the ignoble nature of the activities expected of them. The better men refused the work, in spite of the allurement of high pay, and with still more reason in Russian Poland where many Russians were themselves disgusted by the *régime* and its executive.

In the course of a chequered career the last turn of which threw him into the arms of Germany, to the surprise of none who knew him intimately, the old leader of the Cadets, M. Miliukov, was never much troubled with a sensitive conscience. He, however, shared for some time the liberal ideas and generous inspirations of the *élite* of his party. Dismissed from the Universities of Moscow and of Sofia in succession, where in truth he employed himself less in teaching history than in political propaganda, he was in Paris in 1904, after having refused, so he said, the offer of a Chair at Warsaw. Interrogated by the author as to the motive of his refusal, he answered that in his judgement history at Warsaw should be taught in Polish by Poles.

It was taught in Russian by men whose least fault was that they were entirely ignorant of that which they were charged to teach to others. These Russianizers, together with assistants appointed for the purpose, devoted themselves to perverting and misleading their pupils, and altogether exercised a demoralizing influence much resented by the few Poles admitted to a share in the teaching. Russian journals themselves drew attention to a case some years ago of an employee of the State Control, who having pointed out an instance of malversation which he had discovered, was severely blamed for this

and sent in disgrace to the confines of Siberia. The sole corrective for such a rule, the full harm of which has not here been discussed, is to be found in its extreme inconsistency. Once when on horseback by the sandy shores of the Niemen the author met with a surprise almost like the vision of a mirage. At the extremity of a vast plain, with no trace of human habitation, the appearance of a cathedral in Byzantine style suddenly arose before his eyes. Quickening his pace, the rider found that it was not an illusion. An edifice of vast proportions was there, without anything to explain why. In a neighbouring hollow was a village with about four homesteads. That did not suffice for an explanation. Although apparently of recent construction, the church seemed abandoned and falling into ruin. Enormous fissures were to be seen on the walls, which seemed built of very fragile material, and wild plants grew before the entrance. On his return the key to the enigma was given to the discoverer by his Lithuanian hosts.

During four centuries of Ottoman rule no mosque had been built in Moldo-Wallachia. The Russian Government has filled Catholic Poland with Orthodox temples. One had but lately encumbered the finest site in Warsaw, where the Austro-German authorities, since their occupation of this town, alternately assigned it to Pro-

testant and Catholic worship. A sum of 500,000 roubles had accordingly been set apart for the construction of a cathedral with Byzantine cupolas in the Volhynian town of Dubno. By chance it happened that some hundreds of leagues farther north there was a Lithuanian hamlet of the same name as this town, bordering on the Niemen, and this coincidence suggested to certain ingenious *tchinovniks* the idea of a profitable hoax. The constructors had spent some thousands of roubles in building a cardboard edifice which, being of no use in the spot where they placed it, would cause neither claim nor objection. They divided the surplus, and the State Control shut its eyes. Theory and practice of Russian rule in the Polish provinces is symbolically and eloquently expressed in this anecdote.

The trial has been hard, and it cannot be, alas, but that it should leave its traces. But at the hour when it seems to be drawing to a close, it is due to the Poles to testify that they have not succumbed. They have, during their life in death, passed through the seven circles of Dante's *Inferno* without irremediable destruction, and, though wounded and bleeding, neither crushed nor debased. They have kept their honour intact, and their faith, ready for the hour of resurrection, which they hope and believe is about to strike.

CHAPTER IX

RESURRECTION

§ 1

THE pages of this chapter will be few. The years we have just lived through have so falsified all predictions and calculations that prophecy would be futile. An immense hope has been awakened in the heart of a people which was once great, and has remained worthy of its past; it would seem possible to await the fulfilment with confidence; but the time, space, and form it may assume remain hidden for the present. For the whole of humanity, moved to its depths by the seeming birth of a new and better era, future possibilities are still full of mystery. They depend on certain fateful events which are still in the course of development, and which, even though seeming to take a favourable turn, may at any moment bring us new surprises. No one in the world can guess what to-morrow may bring forth, and only certain elements of the problems can be fruitfully examined.

The political *régime* of resuscitated Poland has become the subject of a controversy which

of itself seems premature. Ancient Poland with its double paradox of a republic presided over by a king, and of a democracy composed of nobility, provides no determining indication, and the tombstone is not yet entirely removed. On this point it is only possible to review certain hypotheses.

When we consider how Austro-German Imperialism, attempting the restoration of the throne of Piasts and Jagellons, was unable, as between allies, to agree as to whether it should be occupied by a Habsburg or a Hohenzollern, it is difficult indeed to imagine the chiefs of the great Western democracies as the purveyors of a dynastic apparatus, the material for which they would not readily find. Germany has up to the present possessed a kind of monopoly for this sort of thing; but she is in danger of being entirely disqualified, at least for some time.

Moreover, foreign dynasties never succeeded in taking root in ancient Poland, and it is doubtful whether the new Poland would be any more propitious. It is true that since the extinction of the Jagellons, who were of Lithuanian origin, no native dynasty could be founded in the country. The outlook therefore is not encouraging. But this question, as a speculation, is but of secondary interest, at least for the moment. Before asking ourselves what sort of Poland there will be to-morrow, let us make sure

that there will be one, and know for certain *where* she will be. And the much-discussed problem of its delimitations itself suggests a multitude of contingencies which remain uncertain.

§ 2

Frontiers historic? Frontiers ethnographic? As between Poland and Russia the dispute is concentrated on this dilemma. Since last year new claims have intervened for a third point of view. The disintegration of Russia seemed favourable to Polish interests. It has, however, given an unforeseen impetus to the separatist movement in which those interests have met with a new danger. This has its origin in both countries at a period nearly as remote as the very beginning of their formation, in which it is inherent: vast agglomerations of ethnic elements, ill assorted and combined, at the same time drawn and attracted each one from without by other centres more nearly akin to themselves in national and religious characteristics.

However irritating this side of the problem may be for the Poles, they are bound frankly to consider it to avoid any appearance of denying those principles on which their own aspirations are founded. The placing on the order of the day the restoration of Poland had as its starting-

point in the present crisis the recognition on the part of civilized humanity of this postulate: that every historic entity, however small, has an equal right to an independent life, and that its interests, material and moral, should be respected. It remains to be seen if, and in what measure, this principle is applicable to the case in hand, also it is due to the Poles that the facts relating to the subject should be brought to light. The summing-up of these facts is as follows. There was in the thirteenth century in the basin of the Niemen an embryo Lithuanian state, which in the succeeding century attained a rapid and inordinate growth through the rooting up of the first Russian empire, whose domain along the shores of the Dnieper mostly passed to Lithuania, Poland absorbing the surplus. The conquering race of Lithuania was really the inferior both in numbers and capacity, so that in the end it accepted from the conquered nationality, language, customs, and religion, becoming completely Russianized. But from the beginning of the fifteenth century, uniting with Poland, it abandoned to her the greater part of its Russian acquisitions on the banks of the lower Dnieper, and with them gave itself up to the penetrating influence of Polish culture.

From that time up to yesterday, the destinies of the two people have been closely united, in good and evil fortune, the Polish element exer-

cising an irresistible attraction over that very portion of the Lithuano-Russian element which by its culture would have seemed the most able to resist it. The great Lithuano-Russian families, Radziwill, Sanguszko, Sapieha, are in nothing to be distinguished from the other members of the Polish aristocracy, and the lesser nobility of the country hardly keeps any distinctive traits of originality, save in the form of provincialism. A country squire on the shores of the Niemen differs less from his congener on the banks of the Vistula than does a Norman from a Gascon.

As to the mass of the population, Polish or Jewish in a large majority in the towns, they have retained no clear indication of Lithuanian descent except in one small area. The district in question lies approximately within a line starting from the Baltic south of Libau, passing eastward above Birsen to Dwinsk, then south as far as just north of Grodno (leaving Wilno without), then turning north-west and by a sinuous line reaching the Kurisch-Haff, under Labiau. Here the Lithuanian element is strongly mixed with the Lettish. For the rest, the population in the provinces of ancient Lithuania belongs to that composite variety of the Slav race which has been the subject of dispute for centuries between Poland and Russia, is strongly impregnated with Polish influence, and is commonly called Little

Russian or Ruthene, but which belongs mainly to the Russian type.

Up to yesterday a culture specifically Lithuanian has been unknown. Up to the eighteenth century the Lithuanian tongue remained simply a dialect, having literary expression only in translations of the Bible, in prayer-books and liturgical works. Towards the middle of last century two Germans, having a special taste for ethnographic curiosities, or possessed of superior foresight, created a demand for certain works—some very feeble fables, and a rustic heroic poem, not without charm, by a poet who had had a fancy to write, a hundred years earlier, in the popular idiom of his country. This Christian Donalitius (Donaleitis) has had no imitators save amongst authors of brochures or newspaper articles of a political character designed as propaganda, and the true literary monument raised to the glory of this country is the celebrated poem by Mickiewicz, beginning: "Lithuania, O my country, thou art like health . . .' which is written in Polish.

Since Kieistut and Olgerd, who were of the fourteenth century, the great men born in the country belong to Polish history, and its most illustrious sons were Kosciuszko, the last hero of independent Poland, and Mickiewicz, its greatest poet. In our own days even, most of the celebrated Poles have been of the same

origin, and Henri Sienkiewicz signed his first works with the pseudonym of Litwos, without imagining any more than Kosciuszko that he could be regarded as other than a Pole.

A Lithuanian State having nevertheless existed, it may be that the hour of resurrection has also struck for her; but it is certain that for the moment no specific element of nationality could be found to put into it, and it is not less certain that the separatist movement is not the product of spontaneous generation. Its former manifestations were invariably made by some Lithuano-Polish grandees, to whom, as to a hero of a tale by Kipling, arbitrary customs and lawless fancies have given a taste for the profession of king. This was the case in the seventeenth century with several members of the Radziwill family, and at the beginning of the nineteenth there was an imitator, a Count, afterwards Prince Oginski, scion of another illustrious family of the same origin, to-day extinct. This man, after having landed in Paris and tried to gain over Napoleon to his project against the Russians, went to St. Petersburg, where he set himself to interest Alexander I against the French. At different times Prussia, Sweden, and Russia have favoured and even raised the question of Lithuanian independence, the probability being that they loved Lithuania less for herself than *against some one else*.

The more recent appearance and development of a Lithuanian *Taryba* is much of the same nature as the historic incidents which we have indicated.

If it were shown that a proposed constitutional change corresponded to the real wishes of a people whose historic or ethnic individuality it is difficult to determine, they should be respected even if inspired from a foreign source, and had they the power, which is not the case, the Poles could not hinder the design without betraying their own past. Lithuania belonging half to Poland, half to Russia, not by ties of political subjection but in her very being, it is difficult to conceive why she should seek to be released. That is her affair. But it is the whole world's affair to make certain that the deliberations of the *Taryba* really represent the will and interests of the community of which they are supposed to be the expression (according to Wolff's Agency), rather than those of certain *Soviéts*, composed of Israelites in German pay who have during the past year thrown Russia into an abyss of ruin and horror such as the world has never known. And this point cannot be made clear, however necessary it may be, until after Germany has lost the power of enforcing the influence of which the world has learnt both the power and the malignity.

The case of the Ukraine is more complex.

§ 3

There is not, there never has been, there never could be a Ukrainian nationality. Ukraine—*oukraïna*, *okraïna*—in the Slav languages is exactly the equivalent of the word mark, marche (border) in the tongues of the West, and there has therefore been a Polish Ukraine, as also many others in divers times and places which were Russian. But the term Ukraine alone does not correspond to any entity, political, historical, or ethnical. Used in this way, it has no meaning, and in another way, applied to actual facts, it is an anachronism. In former days it was specially used of the Russian lands on the two sides of the lower Dnieper, which Lithuania ceded to Poland as related above. The Lithuanian State, after its union with Poland, kept a large measure of autonomy. It was therefore inevitable that the provinces ceded to Poland should claim the same privilege. The Polish government put itself in the wrong by refusing this legitimate claim. Revolts were the result. They were powerfully supported in the seventeenth century by the Cossacks of the neighbouring region, who possessed a strong military organization and advanced communal tendencies, and they succeeded in forming several autonomous States, of which the protectorate was often the subject of dispute between Poland, Muscovy,

and Turkey. Muscovy became predominant in the greater part of the territories in question, and lost no time in replacing the protectorate with annexation, which was followed by insurrections, Mazeppa, the ally of the Swedes against the Russians, succeeding Chmielnicki, the ally of the Russians against the Poles. At length, at the first partition of Poland, Russia took possession ofwhat remained of the already divided Ukraine, pretending thus to be gathering together all Russian territory—the ancient patrimony of Rurik, whose rightful heir she claimed to be.

Though reduced by expropriations of every kind, the Polish landholders, great and small, were of importance in this region, and rural life remained to a great extent under their influence. But in the towns the majority of the population is Russian or Jewish, and in the country, save for the aristocratic element, almost exclusively Little Russian. Culture is both Russian and Polish. The popular language is a Ruthene dialect, with but slight literary form, very different in the poetical work of Shevtchenko and in the historic work of Hroushevski, both very inferior to the Provençal productions to which they are akin. The only great writer to whom the country has given birth up to now has not used the language of either Ukrainian author. He was called Gogol, and he lived and died in

the belief that he was as Russian as the most Russian of all Russians.

In its present form the Ukrainian movement might well be a sort of continuation to the traditions of Chmielnicki or Mazeppa; but it started about thirty years ago in Eastern Galicia, where, although it aimed at separation from Russia, against which it was directed, it had no reason for existence, seeing that this portion of the ancient Empire of the house of Rurik had been cut off from it since the fourteenth century. It is universally notorious that its first impulse came from an Austrian manœuvre, the double object of which was to check Russia on one side and to restrain Poland on the other.

The representative value of the Ukrainian *Rada* constituted last year cannot be determined until after this Assembly shall have ceased to carry on its deliberations under the shadow of the Austro-German flags. One indication may be pointed out, however, as to the man who is the most active promoter of Ukrainian "liberation": known under the name of Helfand Parvus, and the intimate friend of Lenin and Trotski, he was formerly president of a revolutionary *Soviét* at Moscow, in 1905, and also agent for German propaganda in Turkey, Bulgaria, and Italy. Correspondent of *Vorwärts*, and political writer attached to the left wing of the Social-Democracy, he has combined all

these functions with that of director of an Imperialist Review, published in Germany.

At the beginning of 1917, the German military authorities were interested by a voluminous correspondence, addressed from Eastern Galicia to a Russian prisoner named Iérmolenko, which seemed to indicate that he was actively employed in the service of the separatist cause. Proposals were made offering him liberty and a considerable sum of money if, when returned to Russia, he continued the same efforts in concert with certain German agents, whom he would find working for this object and for others. It appeared subsequently that this correspondence had miscarried. This Iérmolenko was not the one intended to receive the intercepted letters but another of the name, a brave officer, quite incapable of undertaking the *rôle* offered to him. By the advice of his comrades, however, he pretended to accept it, and thus returning to Petrograd in April 1917, he was able to convey to M. Kerenski's government the most detailed information on the Bolshevist plot of which the Ukrainian movement was but one element. M. Kerenski, for reasons to be explained, did not make use of the information. After the first attempt of the Bolsheviks in July of the same year, several Russian journals and the *Novoié Vrémia* in particular, published details of this adventure.

§ 4

With certain reservations, what has been said about Lithuania also applies to the Ukraine; but it seems right that if a return to independence is possible and legitimate in these two countries, it should be prepared under other conditions and by other hands. A very active, though not very successful, propaganda in favour of Ukrainian independence has been carried on in Switzerland since 1914 by a group of refugees whose interest in the cause springs from different and often enigmatical reasons. Among the number figures a certain Count Michael Tyszkiéwicz, the author of many publications, and the editor of a journal inspired by very far-reaching ambitions. To satisfy this separatist, independent Ukraine as dreamed of by him, it seems, is to include the whole of Lithuania. Owners of beautiful domains near Kiev, the Tyszkiéwiczes possess some still more vast (one of which is entailed) in the environs of Wilno and Kowno.

This outline of the movement brings to light its extreme complexity, the delicate problem of the future frontiers of Poland being closely united with it.

In a letter addressed to the president of the National Polish Committee sitting in Paris in September 1918, M. Clemenceau guaranteed the reconstitution of Poland "within the frame of

her historic limits." To a certain number of Poles the formula seemed wanting in precision, a frame (*cadre*) being conceived of as being "not more," never "not less." Others again have explained it to mean Poland "from one sea to the other," of which the ambitious patriotism of some has made, without sufficient reason, an irreducible postulate.

It is doubtless true that Polish history has developed between the two shores of the Baltic and the Black Sea. Once for a time it attained these extreme limits. The claims thus set up are somewhat ill-founded. Gdansk remained a Polish town until the second partition (1794), and in the fifteenth century Polish colonists in the riverine country of the lower Dnieper pushed across the space of "no man's land," the steppes bordering on the Black Sea, and so, setting foot on its shore, founded settlements. But as the Polish Government gave no support to this enterprise, it had but an ephemeral result. On the other hand, the prolonged possession of a considerable part of coast on the Baltic was not accompanied by a corresponding development of naval power. The Polish flag has never floated on the sea over merchant vessel or battleship of any importance. Doubtless it would be a mistake to deduce from this a presumption of incapacity. Of Polish origin in the main, the Cossacks of the Dnieper rapids, who in their

light skiffs braved the Ottoman Power as far as the Bosphorus, were skilful and hardy mariners. But, being essentially landsmen, the Polish nobility had no taste for things of the sea, and they were all-powerful. Outside of this controversy, which, in so far as it concerns the Black Sea, Poles of good sense turn aside by moving the previous question, the problem offers great difficulties even in the West, where they are least.

§ 5

The matter rests on the question of right and the question of fact. If a Poland is to be reconstituted, it is evidently right that it should include, together with the Lake of Goplo, from the shores of which the Polish Eagle took its flight, the ancient Palatinate of Poznan, the cradle of the State to be resuscitated. And it matters little that the Western frontier of this province is "but two hours by motor from Berlin" (an observation made by William II to the United States Ambassador on the eve of the day when that Power was to enter into war with Germany). It is evidently not the fault of the Poles if, whatever pains the Germans take to Teutonize Slav localities, a *Pankow* is still found amongst the suburbs of the capital itself of the German Empire, and a quite Polish *Nowa wies* (new village) amongst the stations on the railway between Berlin and Potsdam.

Fact could not on this point override right, and it is not likely that any conflict of opinion would ensue. But if, as the Entente Powers have engaged themselves to bring about, the resurrection of Poland is to assure her people access to the sea, then without doubt right demands that the whole length of the Vistula, a river whose sources and mouth were seized by acts of brigandage, the effects of which the civilized world as against the powers of barbarism is resolved to destroy, should, with Gdansk, be restored to its former possessors.

Yes, but in fact, with Marienburg, the ancient capital of the Teutonic Order, and Königsberg, the native land of Kant, this line would leave separated from Prussia the cradle of this other State, a land anciently Slav, but completely Germanized for these five hundred years. The return to the *status quo* before 1794 would be a solution ensuring continuity of union between Prussian possessions, with a passage preserved across Polish possessions to keep them in touch. This would no doubt be difficult to reconcile, not only with the ideas of the present day in regard to public rights, but above all with the future safety of the Polish State. A more radical solution of this point should therefore be considered.

It is assuredly not right for the Poles to put forward pretensions of a sort which could be said

to resemble those of their neighbours, when they themselves were the victims. Since the fifteenth century they retained no more than rights of sovereignty over a part of this province, which the traditional disloyalty of Prussia rendered only nominal, and they bear the heavy responsibility of having given up to the Teutons a large part of the Slav inheritance. But apart from all idea of claiming back, or any spirit of covetousness, it may be permitted to consider that not all "cradles" are equally respectable. In this one—a nest torn by birds of prey from peaceable doves—was hatched the hideous brood of monstrous things—militarism, the national industry of war "fresh and joyous," the cult of every form of force and violence, knavery and cynicism; which, after having corrupted the Germany of Kant and Goethe, is ready to put the whole world to fire and sword. The demilitarization of Germany is written in the official programme of the Allies, and some think this can only be carried out by partly degermanizing Prussia. The opinion of a majority of Poles, if consulted, would probably be that only a German could invent the methods by which Königsberg should cease to be a German town. But it is not necessary that it should remain Prussian, and it does seem an absolute necessity that the whole Vistula should return to Poland, if its restoration is not to be limited to a protocol of Chancellories.

Up to now but one instance has been examined, illustrating the perplexity of the problem; but how numerous and disconcerting are those which rise up when we turn to the Eastern territories in dispute!

§ 6

Lastly, Russians, the most chauvinist and most hostile to Poland, such as M. Miénchikov in the *Novoié Vrémia*, have admitted that the possession of one part of Poland has been really a disadvantage to Russia, and they have declared for the return of the Polish people to independence on an ethnographical basis. The principle was adopted by Mr. Wilson in one of his declarations. Let us apply it hypothetically to one of the ancient possessions of the Republic, in which the controversy is presented in a way the least favourable to Polish interests. Russian statistics show barely 3 per cent. as the Polish element in the population of the province of Kiév, a province disputed by the Ukrainians with the Russians to this day. Among the collaborators of M. Miénchikov on the great journal founded by the late Suvorine, some years ago, there was a political writer of great talent, a native of this region, the late Constantin Skalkowski. He was orthodox, was the author of several works in Russian, was a high functionary of Russian

administration, and Russian statistics could of course admit no doubt of his Russian nationality. Yet the writer of these lines had in his hands the manuscript memoirs left by this man's father. They are written in Polish and appear without any possible doubt to be the work of a Pole, who had passed his whole life at home among persons of the same ethnic character.

Russian statistics make no account of the effects, often more apparent than real, of the policy of Russification carried out in these latitudes for a century and a half. They describe as Russian all those who belong to the Orthodox Church, whose consent to join it has often been forced, as in the case of children of mixed marriages, which the dominant church claims in virtue of a law which has retained its vigour up to our own day. Finally, the reduction of the Polish element by means of expropriation or of exile cannot be invoked in support of a right even when founded on the principle in question.

Shall we oppose to it the principle of historic delimitation? The difficulty would not be diminished in this domain.

"Kiév," say the Russians, "is the mother of our towns, the metropolis of our religion, the ancient capital of the Russian Empire of Iaroslav and Vladimir." "Yes," answer the Poles, "but this same town was up to 1667 the chief seat of

a Polish Palatinate, the centre up to the same period of a Polish culture which spread as far as Moscow, and also of an economic life lasting to our own day, and in which the Polish element held the first place."

Throughout the extent of the ancient frontiers between Poland and Russia, which are moreover movable (Smolensk also figured for some time as the head-centre of a Polish Palatinate), analogous difficulties are encountered. As Kiév on the Dnieper is claimed by both Russians and Ukrainians, so is Kowno on the Niemen by both Russians and Lithuanians. This last is the birthplace of Mickiéwicz! The inextricable entanglement of conditions, interests, and contentions that history has created in these parts constitutes a second Gordian knot, which can no more be cut by the stroke of a sword than it can be untied by means of diplomatic protocols.

§ 7

The claims and aspirations of Lithuania and the Ukraine should be reserved for later consideration. But the two great nations, Russian and Polish, have to settle between themselves an account which is assuredly more heavy as against Russia than against Poland. Not because the Russians who went to Warsaw committed cruelties. The Poles were in Moscow

at an earlier period and did not leave there the softest of memories. The Russians did the greater wrong by making over Warsaw, Posen, and Danzig to Prussia, and by having afterwards joined in the partition, amounting to one-half, with the common enemy of the race. A crime calling upon Heaven for vengeance? Yes! Inexpiable? No! Vengeance has already come, and a terrible expiation has begun. It might even be said that the punishment exceeds the offence, for in the former crime the Russians had only a passive complicity, themselves victims, like the Poles, of the same exterior forces to which the mistaken policy of Peter the Great had delivered over their country. With more justification than the man who has incurred the eternal hatred of humanity by letting loose upon her the destructive scourge of the present war, before the work of the years 1772–1795, as before that of 1917–18 in Russia, they could say: "We did not wish for it." Conquest doubtless they willed in the eighteenth century, but not dismemberment and equal sharing of the spoils with Germany.

They allowed the Holstein-Gottorps and the Anhalt-Zerbsts, a century and a half ago, to do what the Lenins and Trotzkys are doing to-day, instruments all of them of the same foreign Powers, and, dismembered in their turn, the conquerors of 1794 are more humiliated by the

band of Jewish brigands who pillage and dishonour them than were ever the vanquished of Maciéjowice.

Ought not this historical vengeance of Nemesis to satisfy the Poles? And may we not hope that a common misfortune may lead the two nations to a *rapprochement*? The insane crisis into which Russia has now been thrown digs a trench, as it were, full of blood and mud between them. But it cannot last, and before the scenes of horror of which Petrograd and Moscow became the theatre were enacted, the streets of Warsaw witnessed another which one is tempted to regard as symbolic, a promise and a hope for the future: Polish women kissed the hands of the Russian soldiers who passed through the town to meet the Germans and to defend the ancient capital of Poland.

Poland did certainly not gain by union with Russia, and she owes some cruel sufferings to this enforced relation. But the conditions of this experience were caused by the same *régime* which led Russia herself to her present position. This *régime* will remain condemned, even if a violent reaction, which is partly foreseen, should bring about its return. Sooner or later, beside a new Poland, a new Russia will arise, and without mentioning other combinations suggested in the future and which would better harmonize with the interests of both, the union of Poland

and Lithuania in the past offers a seductive precedent.

Its realization is not within the possibilities of the moment. The Poles have too much to forget, the Russians too much to be forgiven; but at the hour when men have come from the four corners of the earth and mingled their blood in defending a common cause, how can it be possible that two members of the same family, though for long separated and armed against each other, should continue eternally to prolong a quarrel which has already cost them so much bloodshed in fratricidal struggles and so many tears?

The fusion of these two peoples is neither possible nor desirable. In a space so vast, diversities of type are a necessity and an element of wealth. But, in the form of federation, or in a larger and more adaptable form, an agreement between the sister nations of the Slav world, working out their existence and development, without doing injury to their individuality or shackling their liberty, ought to be considered one of the possibilities of the future, more or less distant. Otherwise, the delimitation in detail of Poland and Russia across territories over which both one and the other have in turn exercised authority will remain an insoluble problem.

And whilst awaiting the day when the stone

shall be lifted from above, a Poland restored to independence, may we hope that to the joy of resurrection may be joined in wounded hearts and angry spirits a readiness to be appeased, which will make all provisional solutions easy.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

It has no doubt been made clear that the design which inspired this study has been in no-wise meant to prejudice the decisions of the future Peace Congress, still less to dictate its opinions. Its aim has been clearly to define some of the problems as preliminary to their discussion, and the author will feel that he has attained his end if he has contributed, by ever so little, to relieving Poland from the weight of certain severe criticisms on her past, and also in warning the Poles themselves against certain errors of judgement to which some of them seem subject.

However much responsibility it must shoulder for the misfortunes which overwhelmed it, no one can say that this people deserved so cruel a fate. The probability is that by arresting the development of a career in which a happy prospect seemed to be promised, adverse circumstances alone prevented it from attaining the full measure of those brilliant qualities which had always accompanied its defects. Its part in European culture was nevertheless not insignificant, and it thus created for itself a claim to

the future reparation which now seems assured to it.

In fighting against the same ideas, traditions, and forces of barbarism which had formerly made a victim of Poland, the civilized world owed it to itself to take her cause in hand. The promises with which it has roused her hopes, the undertakings made with this intention, have given rise to a double misunderstanding. The Poles were justified in wishing for more clearness and precision; some of them made the mistake of interpreting them too literally in accordance with over-presumptuous ambitions.

Doubtless, what with trials endured and principles professed in the course of an existence that had not been without glory, their tragic fate was worthy of the signal privilege of in some sort personifying the interests at stake in the conflict, that conflict in which humanity is always engaged, between the heritage of discord and violence from which its noblest part seeks to free itself, and the ideal of justice and peace which it tries to attain at the price of frightful sacrifices and which is the part which Poland represented in its history. But a contrary fate willed that in this struggle the Poles should never show themselves in their true place, either materially or morally, and should they make ambitious claims this would no doubt be recalled.

And without doubt there is excuse for them

this time for not having come in greater number to the service of the common cause. For nearly a century and a half their blood has flowed freely from every pore, and we cannot be surprised that there was none left for the supreme holocaust. Unfortunately, though they fought with a valour worthy of the soldiers of Sobieski, the combatants under the French flag were but a handful; *activistes* of another kind but more numerous were there also under the same flag. Their equivocal manœuvres and dubious compromises would have lost the cause so ill-defended by them if they had been recognized for its accredited representatives. They were nothing but dummy figures posturing at the commands of the temporary masters of their country, and Poland has a right to disavow them. Modesty is incumbent on her, and if she is to nurse higher ambitions, in harmony with her past, she must wait until she can put forth efforts worthy of those ambitions.

The common interests of the civilized world demand that she should not be stinted of the means of existence and expansion. Everything which she gains will be taken from some barbarian Power or other. Whatever she receives, she will not be worth more in the end than the sum of work and capacity which she is able to put into her task.

Finally, her rebirth and the future prosperity

which she hopes to attain can only be possible in a Europe herself reformed, a Europe wherein, owing to the triumph won over the most frightful abuse of force and the absolute and definite repudiation of the ideas and customs which have prevailed up to now, the weakest, equally with the strongest, will acquire the right to win in freedom and guard in safety their daily share of food and sunshine.

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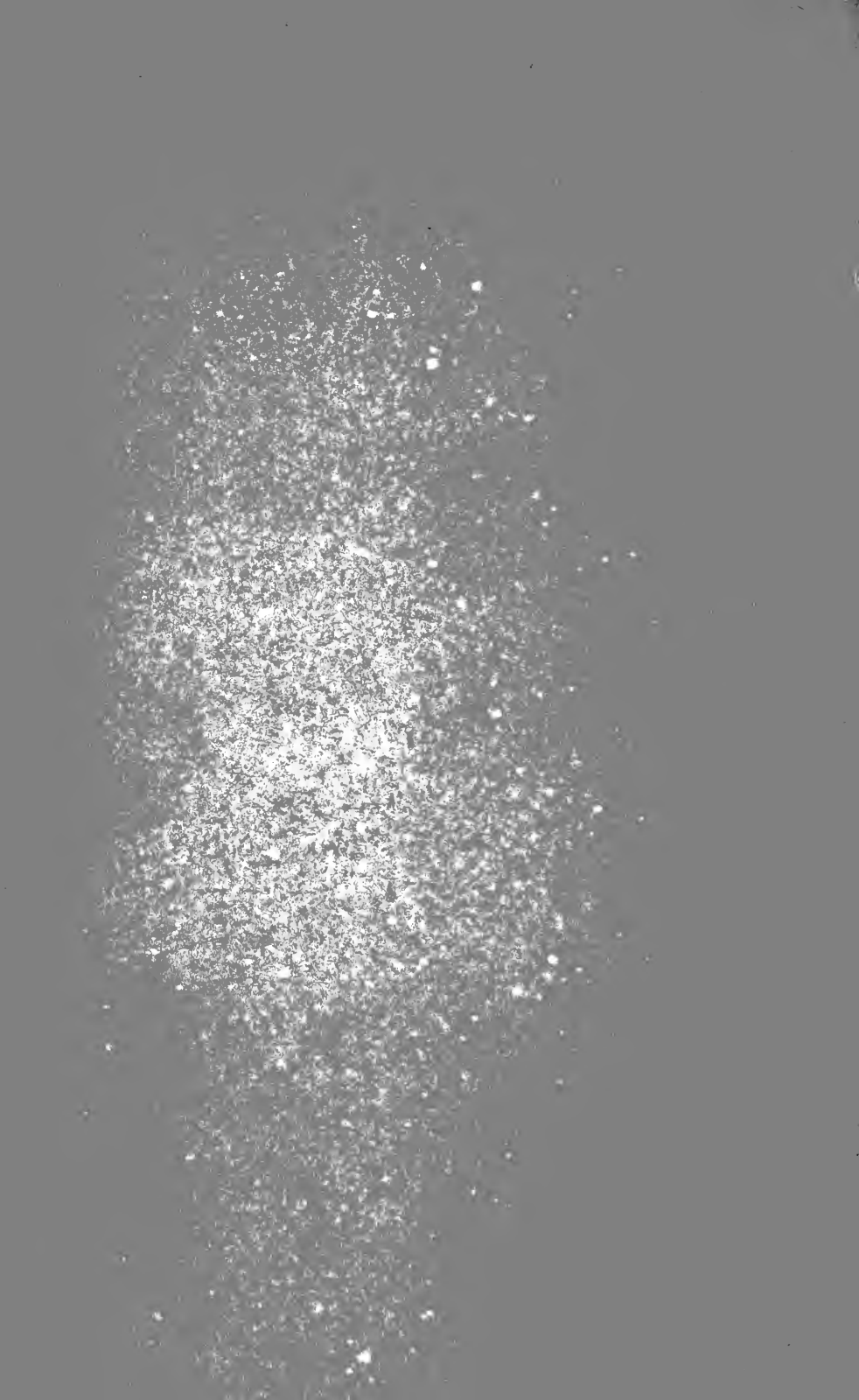

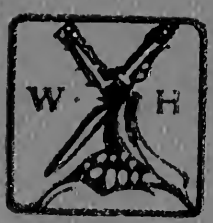
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